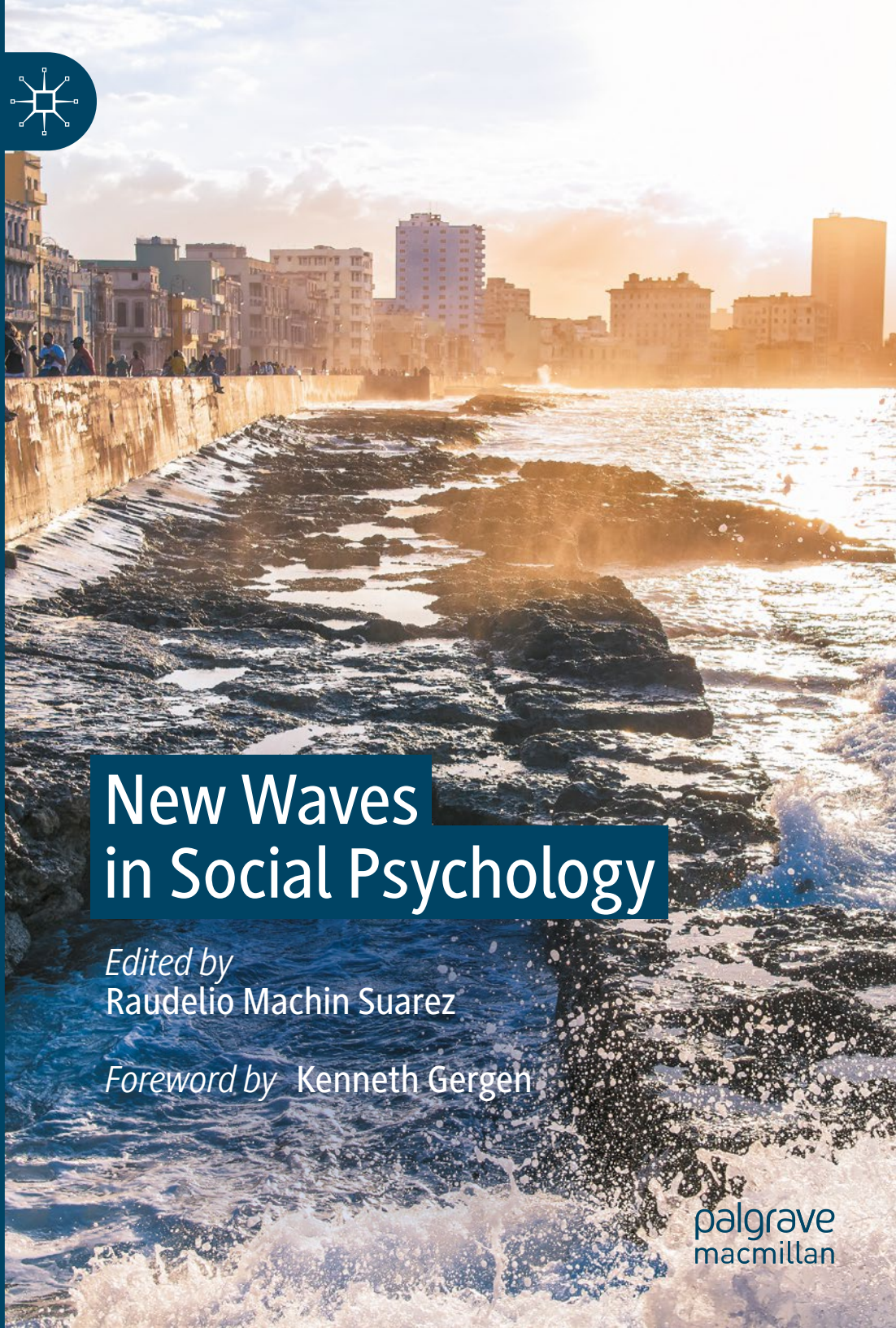

New Waves in Social Psychology

Edited by
Raudelio Machin Suarez

Foreword by Kenneth Gergen

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To Harold, Dylan, and Liudmila.

Foreword

The opportunity to offer preliminary comments on the present volume is a special privilege. It is not simply because of the rich and illuminating constellation of contributions contained in the work. But from my particular perch in social psychology, I see this book as a significant historical marker. It provides informed insight into the unfolding transformation of the field, while simultaneously preparing the way for probing reflection on the future.

To set the context for these remarks, let me share from my own history in the field. I entered graduate school in social psychology filled with dreams and aspirations of making a contribution to human well-being. I soon found myself immersed in courses on experimental methodology, measurement, statistics, and the philosophy of science. All were provided with the promise that these were tools for generating objective and value-free knowledge about the social world. With time I also realized that the field of social psychology was in a state of transition. It was in the process of shedding the "dark ages" of armchair speculation and empathic hand-wringing, to become a respected member of the behavioral sciences. It had embraced a logical positivist account of science, with its ultimate aim of enhancing *prediction and control of human behavior*. With the subsequent birth and expansion of the Society for Experimental Psychology, a self-proclaimed elite emerged and with it a supporting infrastructure of journals, research funds, and teaching positions. This positivist orientation ultimately came to dominate social psychology in North America and many parts of Europe.

Although I had learned my lessons well, as a budding professional, I began to feel the oppressive weight of this "disciplining." Over time I began to see social psychology as on the way to becoming an isolated island, where the natives spoke only to themselves about issues on the island. Issues of major consequence within the surrounding society passed without interest. One might say that social psychology was concerned with itself, and not the pressing issues of living together in the world. I began to write critically about these matters, with special concern for the shortcomings of its positivist foundations. During the intellectual battles that followed, I also began to find allies in the struggle against the positivist vision of scientific knowledge. Political theory, literary studies, linguistic philosophy, and the social studies of science were prominent among them. Discontent with twentieth century scientism was widespread. As these various intellectual forces began to merge, the "science wars"—as they were called—swept through the universities. Slowly the philosophic foundations of science gave way to a social account of scientific knowledge. More broadly one could see this as a part of a more general shift from modern to postmodern culture. For me, it was also the formative context for my explorations in social construction.

At least in North American social science, the erosion of positivist foundations was enormously liberating. It brought issues of social and political value into central focus, stimulated a renaissance in qualitative practices of research, and invited cross-disciplinary dialogue. At the same time, the field of social psychology was torn apart. The experimentalists closed ranks in defense of their island, while those who disagreed were left to roam as they wished. At least in the Anglo-European context, critical work blossomed, along with fresh lines of inquiry and practices of research. Engagement in issues of social justice, immigration, neoliberalism, and the environment began to emerge, and the door opened to the participation in the broader dialogues in social and political theory. It is at just this juncture that one begins to appreciate the significance of the present volume.

In my view, psychologists in Latin America along with the Latin-based countries of Europe had never embraced the positivist vision of psychology. Thus, during the science wars, they had been a continuous source of inspiration for us activists in the Anglo orbit. The critical work of Paulo Freire, the liberation psychology movement sparked by Ignacio Martin-Baro, and the participatory action research of Orlando Fals Borda and others were inspirational for us. To be sure, these were significant offerings *during* the science wars. However, the major question then emerged:

What happened to social psychology in the Latin orbit since the postmodern split in social psychology? The present volume not only provides illuminating insight but may serve as the visionary source for a new and liberated social psychology. How should we characterize this vision? Judging from the contributions to the present volume, I find four attributes particularly notable:

Value invested. The critical and liberationist traditions remain strong. In the present work, for example, concerns with political economy, neoliberalism, and minority oppression are all relevant. At the same time, the present work broadens the horizon of relevant concerns to include issues of human values and ethics. Similarly, the research process itself is shown to be value invested.

Pluralist. Abandoning the restrictive confines of positivism, the door is opened here to multiple perspectives and modes of practice. One may thus find in the present work accounts that variously pivot around psychoanalysis, humanism, microsocial process, symbolic anthropology, socio-structural analysis, and relational theory. The pluralist orientation is also evident in the range of research practices, including case studies, personal reports, traditional measurement, action research, historiography, and ethnography.

Intellectually expansive. There is an abiding appreciation of broader intellectual traditions and developments. Casting off the intellectual insularity of the positivist tradition, there is active participation in the currents of intellectual life. In the present volume, for example, chapters are in active dialogue with Deleuze, Habermas, Bachelard, Judith Butler, Charles Taylor, and more. Social psychology is vastly enriched through this blurring of academic borders.

Temporally sensitive. While the positivist search for timeless knowledge largely suppressed interest in historical context, the present vision is sensitive to multiple ways in which history and social psychology should be linked. As these chapters show, not only can research work be specifically invested in social change, but it can place its focus on historical change itself. We thus find chapters concerned with the origins of jurist culture, the emergence of the social imaginary, and the unfolding relationship between technology and forms of social life.

In my view, most of those in the Anglo sphere who split from traditional social psychology would find their own work highly congenial with

one or more of these attributes. There may be differing emphases, but the unvoiced assumptions, interests, and values are strikingly similar. Are we, then, on the threshold of locating a unifying vision for a new and enriched form of social psychology? The question is both exciting and complex. There is first the issue of unifying framework. Positivist/empiricist philosophy of knowledge had united large segments of psychology as a discipline, and when this philosophic view was ravaged by the science wars, there was no widely embraced replacement. I have argued that most of the central logics used to unseat positivist tradition converge in a social constructionist account of science. Whether those whose work falls within the span of the present vision would also subscribe to a constructionist metatheory remains an open question.

There is also the question of self-organizing. At least within North America and much of Europe, most of those whose work is congenial with the vision emerging here would not identify themselves specifically as social psychologists. This is partly because that designation is so entwined with the positivist tradition that they no longer identify themselves in this way. Further, the freedom of exploration invited by the postmodern turn did not lend itself to identifying with any particular discipline. For myself, there are times when being identified as a psychologist can itself feel uncomfortable. This problem of professional labels is not peculiar to psychology. The postmodern turn in academic life has challenged the very idea of disciplinary boundaries, and new forms of intellectual hybrids are continuously emerging. Consider, for example, the creation of cultural studies, science and technology studies, queer studies, the history of consciousness, gender studies, and environmental studies.

I thus return again to my characterization of this book as a historical marker. For it may be possible that in unfurling the banner of *social psychology*, it can launch the formation of a new and unifying community of inquiry.

Swarthmore, PA — Kenneth J. Gergen

Acknowledgments

As commonly said, a book is the result of the work of many people. Mentioning all that story would be boring for some readers. So, I will refer only to those supports that were essential and can be named. I could go back to the beginnings of some of these concerns in clarifying the possibility of collective subjectivity. I could return to the studies of "emergencies" beyond the instituted. I could rewrite the fears in the academy for that knowledge that comes from the outside. But, for that, it should bring back all of the ghosts that haunt us since the 1990s.

In a strict sense, the book tried to assume the scheme on trends in social psychology that I tried to show my students at Andrés Bello University since 2015 when I had to take on teaching Social Psychology and coordinating that area. I always found interlocutors who could explain each of these topics better than me. I seemed to invite them would be fairly for readers. Only in the cases in which I could not—or they could not accompany me—I had to assume the task of discussing these issues. In that ones, therefore, they will find the vision more skewed, since it is none other than mine, already exposed in different places—conferences, articles, or books.

I am grateful for the generosity of Beatriz Macías, with whom to resume the dialogue after so many years was very fruitful. I am grateful to Roberto Corral, a counterpart of many discussions and unconditional support in complex academic contexts. I thank Iván Torres for their enthusiastic incorporation into the project with their colleague Claudia Calquín. I thank Patricio Rojas, one of the first authors we talked about the proposal, who was also kind enough to invite Sebastián Rojas. I thank Bernadita Labarca, who brought part of her team to work on her chapter. I thank the

student assistant Mario Aguirre for his collaboration with the final touches of Bernadita's work in a difficult moment. Thanks to Plinio Prado, who has been available on several occasions to share with me at tables, colloquiums, and discussion spaces. Thanks, Gisálio Cerqueira Filho and Gizlene Neder, who have always supported us on these issues since Manoel introduced us in 2006. To former student Diana Biscay for her professional and generational contribution to the technological world of social networks and her enthusiastic co-authorship with Chap. 10. I am grateful to Manoel Tosta Berlink, who provided us with spaces for discussion on these issues since 2006, and to all members of the Latin American Association of Fundamental Psychopathology.

Thanks to Kenneth J. Gergen, who accompanied us in its conception and wrote a generous foreword.

To my eldest son Harold, who is increasingly incorporated into the world of science, and little Dylan simply that incorporates—as Serrat would say.

To Hortensia and Raudelio, the first interlocutors that believed in me.

I am grateful to Liudmila, who, in addition to being a counterpart for the discussion of many of these ideas—since 1998—is co-author, editor, and proofreader of several of my texts and again in this project.

Overview

The book's objective is to present an update on social psychology as a disciplinary space and, in particular, on research in this field. The proposed title and subtitle are representative of that interest: the new wave(s) in this field and its disciplinary and epistemic connections, as well as the challenges facing academics and practitioners today.

The volume presents articles of theoretical discussion on the scientific, political, ethical, and systemic state of the discipline. The investigations that illustrate these new tendencies combine some more consolidated proposals with other riskier ones: several visions of critical social psychology from the perspective of the emancipation of knowledge; the theory of performativity and its influence on social psychology; the place of the subject and collective subjectivity in the referential frameworks for research; political and legal studies and their challenges to social psychology; qualitative research approaches in online communities; and the place of virtuality in the human experience, among others.

Based on some classic authors' schools of thought, some chapters offer a refresh reading to ask questions to the current social context. Moreover, they discuss innovative aspects in thematic, theoretical, or methodological terms. But, perhaps the most significant thing is that the collected works constitute emergent "cultural objects", wave crests in the wide traditional ocean that has been until very recently social psychology in some spaces, particularly in academic ones.

Even though they do not share other points of view, the authors in this book are probably related to defining the psychological in a social or cultural sense. This cultural perspective necessarily leads to understanding

the subject and subjectivity, result and cause of culture. Some readers could see these chapters close to critical psychology, philosophical psychology, political psychology, or even posthumanist psychology. However, they will realise that all of them share at least the discussion around the need and conditions of possibility of psychology called social—or cultural and dialogues about the particularities of the human experience in each context.

However, it is precisely the thematic, epistemic, theoretical, or praxis differences, and fundamentally the human experience of its authors, that enrich this book, whose sole claim is, rather than legitimize something, to delegitimize narcissistic academic practices and self-fulfilling that, precisely by legitimizing, they exclude.

In this book, you will find an analysis of contemporary trends in social psychology as a field of research and a diverse map of its thematic, theoretical, and methodological foundations, which is hardly found in any other book. Generally, social psychology books are monographic or include only one theoretical perspective. In some other cases, those who dedicate themselves to showing the thematic and academic diversity of the field typically do so in a didactic rather than an analytical sense. This project brought together researchers from various fields whose work represents a contemporary critical node of social psychology research. They were asked to write position papers on their topic, with a solid argument, based on their own experience as researchers in this field.

Undoubtedly many were left out, but those are illustrative of the rough sea that social psychology is today.

Contents

Notes on Contributors

Mario I. Aguirre Rosemberg has a BA in Psychology from the Andrés Bello University, Chile, where he studied mostly psychoanalysis and studies included at the University of Granada in Spain, where he was introduced to cognitive psychology. He has also studied programming and data science, and impact evaluation of social projects at the Universidad Católica de Chile. Within his experience, he has had the possibility of working with Amazonian communities in Peru about cross-cultural education to promote a community agency in the city. In addition, he has been an assistant in the subjects of social and educational psychology in the Andrés Bello University, as well as in projects that use different software tools to improve business processes and well-being in terms of human resources, as well as their application in social impact in terms of solving market pain. He is planning a doctorate in the social sciences with interest in sociopolitical transformation under the effects of the new dynamics of the Internet.

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Bernardita Labarca Lira is a psychologist (Bachelor, University Diego Portales, Chile, Master in Social Psychology, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain). She is senior project manager, specializing in the use of mobile technology for development in areas including health promotion and agriculture. Among her project portfolios is the DatAgro project (www.datadyne.org/progarms/mip/datagro), a collaboration between the ZCG and DataDyne.org which involves sending SMS text messages to enhance the productivity of small farmers in Chile's Sixth Region. The DatAgro project was a finalist in the 2009 NetSquared Mobile Challenge and has been awarded both the Yahoo! Green Award and the Social Justice award from the French American Cultural Trust. Formerly Bernarda worked as a consultant for SUR/IDRC on their Latin-American Electronic Waste Platform (www.resiuduoselectronicos.com). She also was a UNDP consultant who worked on the City of Santiago's plan to promote bicycling. In 2007, Bernarda served as executive director of the Association of Active Chilean Telecentres (ATACH—www.atach.cl), where she raised funds to support the organization's growth. From May 2002 to June 2006, Bernarda worked as a communications analyst at the Ministry General Secretariat for the Government of Chile (http://www.msgg.gov.cl/index.php) where she managed media analysis for governmental authorities, the strategic monitoring of public opinion data, and research on media in Chile, including the creation of a multimedia tool for the strategic analysis of news coverage. She has also worked as a researcher for Chile's National Television Council. Between 1996 and 2002, Bernarda lived in Barcelona, Spain, where she studied in the doctoral program in Social Psychology at the Autonomous University of Barcelona and worked as a coordinator of social intervention projects. She serves as an adjunct

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Plínio W. Prado, Jr. is a philosopher, essayist, and a professor at the University of Paris VIII (formerly "Vincennes"). His works develop a thought of language that welcomes the question of the limits of the expressible, opens up on the experience of art and on the trial of the radical otherness that each one shelters in oneself. They draw a general line of resistance to the contemporary annexation of bodies and psyches.

They have given rise to numerous essays devoted to "the childhood of thought" (from Proust and Freud to Lyotard), to the writing of the unnamable (from Wittgenstein to Beckett and to Lispector), to ethical and aesthetic resistance (from Kant to Adorno and beyond), as well as to the "erotic of the teacher relationship" (from Plato to St. Zweig) and the "principle of University". Prado is a visiting professor at several foreign universities : such as Saint Petersburg, Moscow, Hsinchou, Los Angeles, Jerusalem, and Hamburg, etc. He has also taught at the College International of Philosophy in Paris and at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS). A collective book has been dedicated to him: *De l"art d"enseigner. Essais sur le travail de Plínio Prado* (Paris, 2018).

Mario Rodríguez-Mena García holds a PhD in Educational Sciences. He is senior researcher at the Center for Psychological and Sociological Research (CIPS), professor at the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Havana, and president of the Cuban Network for Productive Dialogues of the Cuban Psychology Society.

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Patricio Rojas is a researcher and academic at the Faculty of Education and Social Sciences, Universidad Nacional Andrés Bello, Chile. His research interests include critical social psychology, science and technology studies and philosophy/social theory in relation to health, the "psy" practices, subjectivity, and the body. In addition, he has a long standing interest in the work of authors such as Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, William James, and Sigmund Freud. Rojas is also trained as a psychotherapist and has worked in private practice since 2008.

Iván Torres Apablaza is Doctor in Philosophy and Magister in Sociology and Social Sciences, from the University of Chile. He is a professor at the School of Psychology of the Andrés Bello University in courses on epistemology, social psychology, and the history of psychology. He is also a professor in the Magister in Social Psychology at Universidad Diego Portales in courses on genealogy of the modern state and poststructuralist thought. He is director of *Disenso*, magazine of Political Thought. He develops his research work in contemporary political philosophy, specifically in biopolitics, politics of life, and common thought. His latest publications include the articles "Ethopolitical Modulation of Existence: Archeology of the Political and Ethical Life in Michel Foucault" (*Las Torres de Lucca. International Journal of Political Philosophy*); "The Impasse of Resistance. The Intersection Between Foucault and Deleuze Regarding the Exit from Power", together with Cristóbal Durán Rojas (*Hybris, Revista de Filosofía*); and ""Communism Without Community": Notes on Ontology, Ethics and Politics in the Thought of Jean-Luc Nancy" (*Resonances. Journal of Philosophy*).

Diana Viscay Mantilla holds Professional Degree in Psychology; Master in Clinical Psychology, Social-Legal mention; and Professional Degree in Computer and Computer Engineering, all three from Andres Bello National University, Chile. Her research experience is related to both careers and experience in university teaching since 2006, which includes teaching as a full professor in the last three years (engineering) and assistantships from 2006 to the present (in engineering and psychology). She has completed Community Psychology and Social Intervention Internship and professional practices: (a) in Psychology in Child-Adolescent Clinical Psychology and Legal Psychology and (b) in Engineering, fundamentally in research and application of optimization strategies. Her areas of interest in Psychology are child-adolescent clinical psychology, legal psychology, community psychology, and social intervention.

CHAPTER 1

New Waves in Social Psychology: Research Practices—Beyond the Disciplinary Epistemic and Academic Limits

Raudelio Machin Suarez

One of the most significant difficulties in writing about this topic is precisely the definition of social psychology (Gergen, 1982; Ibañez, 2004; Íñiguez-Rueda, 2003; Munné, 1980/2016; Teo, 2018). For both its apologists and its prominent critics (Canguilhem, 1968; Foucault, 1983), it has been common to understand psychology as a closed field, a relatively univocal discourse, inextricably associated with the "scientific" tradition, and the result of a limited number of practices. However, if we analyze the main complexities when defining what has been and is social psychology, these precisely help us to identify its contemporary features. Ultimately, what we call "new waves" is nothing more than legitimizing several of those features of social psychology, relatively marginalized in narrow definitions, accommodated to certain guilds or institutional walls.

What are these *new waves* in social psychology? They are, from our point of view, the irruption in the instituted, of those forms not previously

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represented, of the concerns about oneself and others, which now reappear as symptoms, in many cases, with the same difficulty of being registered,[1] but now, also more than ever, they precipitate. Of these precipitates, we show here some of the most visible—some of them, not without ambiguities and contradictions, will also be illustrated in the chapters that follow.

As it is known[2], it is difficult to separate the knowledge produced by science, from the social practices that produce it and from the institutions in which it is represented; to which we would have to add[3] the imaginary representations that dominate what that field is and the unrepresented and unrepresentable imaginary that strikes.

In this sense, we appreciate that we are in a good moment of emergency in the praxis[4] and the institutional framework[5], of many of those approaches to social psychology, which for a long time were not mainstream in the mainstream academic institutions nor did they precipitate as objects sensitive to being assigned to the set of psychological knowledge. Still, they coexisted as discourses on the otherness of the object.

This chapter opens the door to the analysis of some of these features and their consequences, both for the production of knowledge and practices and the institutional legitimation of this knowledge and practices and the emergence of associated networks[6] beyond the traditional scientific communities.

Several axes define these features, and they are more diverse than we could address in this chapter. Some of them will be very well represented by some authors in the chapters that follow. Here we will limit ourselves to those that are crucial and seem necessary to us when talking about new waves of social psychology: *the blurring of disciplinary boundaries, epistemic diversification, the renunciation of methodological "aseptic-ism,"*

[1] If you want as a result of the re-legitimization of positivism (Machin, 2010), in "paperism," "methodologization," or the capitalization of knowledge and the university institution as never before.

[2] By the sociology of science and the social studies of science and technology, among other approaches.

[3] Taking into account several of the self-reflective analyses of social psychology represented in this book

[4] Represented in the diversity of forms of existence of social psychologists as agents of change, transformation, and social and cultural creation.

[5] Departments and schools, scientific journals, congresses, and manuals, among others.

[6] A topic that will also be addressed in other chapters of this book.

theoretical diversification, the legitimation of other cultural knowledge, the transition from one era of logos to another of transformative praxis and creation, and the political axis of the constant struggle for legitimizing the diversity of theoretical and methodological currents in social psychology.

The general idea of *new waves* tries to avoid the temptation to make too abstract generalizations; it is about movements and ups and downs, ephemeral, alive, changing, immeasurable, but that does not go unnoticed by anyone who approaches the borders of that sea of practices, discourses, and knowledge. Undoubtedly, these new waves share traits with their times, which allow them a legitimation in certain institutional spaces and communities—real or virtual—that, in our opinion, require greater attention than that granted by those unions or walls of the instituted. The idea of *waves* also refers to a tendency of the imaginary fluid that contains and emerges forms of social psychology, with practical and instituted references and without a claim to representativeness. In this sense, references to social practices—such as research, social intervention, cultural transformation, or militant movements—are a way of visualizing these waves, to give an account of their existence at the level of representation—reproductive, transformative, or creative—and to relate them to other waves yet to emerge.

Legitimation will be one of the topics to discuss here. This is closely related to the instituted or group powers—of human collectives without a clear instituted reference or against the grain of their instituted referents. As we understand it, the legitimizing action sometimes has more disastrous effects on the evolution of thought and social creation than it is recognized. On the one hand, it anchors those legitimate scientific ideas, subjects, or guilds. On the other hand, it limits, hides, and marginalizes the appearance of other significant veins that coexist with the legitimized ones.[7]

[7] When Sabina Spielreim (1912) was writing about the function of repression as a force that dominates and shapes, that generates conflict not only in subjectivity but also in the body, referring to what is to be instituted, she was anticipating some ideas that now seem great and novel to us in Butler's speech (Butler, 1993) but which at the time were marginalized and in turn expropriated by various men of psychoanalysis (Carotenuto & Trombetta, 1981, 1983; Volnovich, 1999). This could seem paradoxical if we consider the internal legitimation problems and outside its disciplinary and institutional borders that the psychoanalytic tradition itself has had to face. Examples like this are numerous in all the humanities and social sciences, and other sciences, which exceed the interest and possibilities of analysis of this chapter.

The Blurring of Disciplinary Boundaries

As has been widely documented (Íñiguez-Rueda, 2003; Garrido & Álvaro, 2003; Gergen, 1982; Teo, 2018), social psychology does not arise exclusively within general psychology but appears at the same time as ideas within philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and other social sciences and humanities, and also in the space of the production of popular questions and knowledge about collective subjectivity, some of which were welcomed respectively by "scientific" disciplines. If in a period—geographically and temporally well limited, no less influential until today—social psychology was intended to be a disciplined field, some contemporary productions[8] make a single and unifying discourse untenable.

In this sense, one of the trends in these new waves is the return to some of the questions of these initiatory moments in their respective disciplines that gave rise to them. Thus, in that return or reformulation to its foundational questions, the tensions of humanistic or social, scientific, or literary fields show at least a possibility of controversy.

The closure on models that approached the exact and natural sciences on the one hand or empiricism and positivism on the other limited—at least in most academic spaces—the conceptions of social psychology. However, in parallel to the chairs of social psychology, research, texts, papers, congresses, theories, and methods continued to be produced, on and in interaction with the psychosocial, with collective subjectivities and with social subjects and actors. The humanities departments produced texts that would have advanced much to interpret "traditional" problems focused in the academic spaces reserved for social psychology, from experimental or quasi-experimental perspectives. The philosophical implications of the findings of quantum physics on indeterminacy, and the systematic review of the problem of continuity (Machin, 2010), did not find a place in those chairs focused on nineteenth-century methods and approaches of the physic. This, however, did not prevent other productions, with content, results, and methods[9], from making creative use of these ideas to put into perspective the complex reality they were studying without their being included within the discourse of social psychology.

[8] With the generation of deconstructive strategies, social action, or methodological laterality, among other disagreements with the academic mainstream.

[9] Today, as a result of these new waves, recognized within the broad spectrum of social psychology.

In the 1960s of the last century, this production of problems, today accepted by social psychology as part of its disciplinary spectrum, was significant: George Devereux, in 1967, in one of his last works, covers many of these ideas and focuses them to a new look at psychology; Lacan, in 1961, dialogues with Merleau-Ponty; Foucault writes *Folie et déraison histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Foucault, 1961), Les Mots et les Choses (Foucault, 1966), and L'archéologie du savoir (Foucault, 1969), texts with consequences for social psychology. Meanwhile in 1968, Gilles Deleuze has published *Différence et Répétition* and in 1972 *L'Anti-Œdipe: Capitalisme et schizophrénie 1*[10], systematically cited today by supporters of a non-essentialist, posthumanism. Beforehand, in Russia, Vigotsky wrote, already in 1927, *The historical significance of the crisis of Psychology,* and to the long tradition—Czech, Hungarian, Bulgarian—of studies on culture, art, and aesthetics, important approaches were incorporated into the subjective production of cultural knowledge, acts, and products.

If, indeed, one wanted to ask about the emergencies of the man-culture/nature nexus, the logical thing would have been to accept the analysis was taking place in the middle of philosophy or aesthetics. Still, those discussions had to wait half a century to have full space in social psychology. Today it is easy to find "novel" works in social psychology on these topics; they are, however, effects of the legitimation of these practices and knowledge, which should always have belonged to him. As a result of a new *blurring of disciplinary boundaries*, both the permeability of this knowledge and practices and their legitimation beyond the old boundaries imposed by closed disciplines are favored.

However, the Latin American context has been especially eclectic, not only in the use, assimilation, reception, or reproduction of theoretical or methodological referents but also in the own production of *trans* knowledge both in the theoretical referents and in the relationship between disciplinary perspectives. For this side of the ocean, the history of relative gradual separation of the social sciences and humanities, experienced by the various disciplines at the end of the nineteenth century and which would affect the first half of the twentieth century, was not so. Many authors maintained their tendency to blur these disciplinary boundaries

[10] The social as a space of partial connections, dominated by desiring machines "(…) terre nouvelle où le désir fonctionne d'apres ses éléments et ses flux molecules…" (Deleuze & Félix, 1972: 379). It will have consequences for the so-called post-humanist or non-essentialist approaches, for problems relevant to social psychology.

based on an eclectic—or elective—enlightened rhetoric throughout the nineteenth century well into the twentieth century (Ramos, 1989; Machin, 2008).

The theoretical diversification that manifested itself as disseminating trends and currents of social psychology, once it left the academies, was unstoppable (Machin, 2010). It was impossible to collect in a book. It can be illustrated just by reviewing the multiplicity of magazines of the last three decades[11].

We prefer to use the word "waves", to refer to the great diversity of theoretical and methodological alternatives difficult to frame in a term that is not exclusive. It is one of the more significant differences with classical Social psychology or with the initial differentiation experienced after what was identified as the "crisis of Social psychology".

The diversity of disciplinary associations was the first step towards a belated recognition of Georges Canguilhem's (1968) observation on the disciplinary dispersion of approaches given the nature of its "object." As Canguilhem remarked, the Greek classics had "(…) Studies related to the soul (…) divided between metaphysics, logic and physics. (…)" (P. 391). Indeed, in these new waves, we meet again with approaches to problems of social psychology, from philosophy, anthropology, medicine, or even biology or physics. This disciplinary contamination of social psychology issues results from its recognition as "science of the soul" rather than the result of the professional intrusion[12]. The relation cultural/natural constitutes an operation to emphasize that the precipitates of that "soul" on which one is interested to study, appear as a result of man's action on culture, society, nature, and himself. Many of these works prefer to omit adjective, considering in itself the operation of the nexus[13] for any study of soul concerning the human being.

[11] Currently, the SCOPUS database, with the subject filters: Arts And Humanities Close Health Policy Close Psychiatry And Mental Health Close Public Health, Environmental And Occupational Health Close Multidisciplinary Close Applied Psychology Close General Psychology Close Psychology (Miscellaneous) Close Social Psychology Close Social Sciences Close, identifies 12,523 journals Psychology Close Social Sciences Close. If we leave only social psychology, 335 different journals still appear. If we consider the criteria required by these indexers to include journals and the dispersion of works in other journals of the humanities, social sciences, mental health, and so on, we could presume such dispersion would be overwhelming.

[12] As it used to be called from a "scientistic" psychology.

[13] You can review Hammack et al. (2019); Tucker (2018); Teo (2018).

Epistemic diversification appeared as a meta-theoretical trend, after theoretical diversity, as an attempt to rectify the indiscriminate dispersion. It is no problem for anyone today to affirm that positivism was dominant in psychology (Machin, 2010) and the social sciences for a long time[14]. As we mentioned before, what is interesting about the period of these new waves, at least for the production of knowledge and research, is that the emergence of other epistemic alternatives can no longer be hidden or delegitimized.

Indeed, it was the Anglo-Saxon tradition that most welcomed positivism[15] as an *episteme*. Still, it existed in most chairs, departments, and the like in schools of psychology in most countries of the world. Even in France, where structuralism as an episteme and its derivations dominated the academic world for several decades, psychology maintained serious ties with positivism. In the former USSR, with the strong presence of the Cultural Historical Approach—and its exciting origin links with structuralism, via Russian formalism or psychoanalysis—positivist manuals and their ways of narrating the story were used when operational definitions were required. Research and the rich Vigotskian thought was degraded, by way of Leontiev and others, in positivist pragmatics, with vague ties to the cultural-historical perspective.

The Cuban context, eclectic par excellence throughout the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, had an exciting reception of the Cultural Historical Approach—the dialectical and historical materialist episteme—with important productions based on questions, premises, and theoretical arguments of Vigotsky. However, each time that an attempt was made to adjust to the methodological, it returned to the pragmatic positivist episteme of the manuals of "research methodology," where Mario Bunge first and Sampieri late became the most cited authors of methodology in research psychology (Machin, 2010). The line of training of PhD's was adjusted to the most positivist and experimentalist of psychology, and the attempts to evade it failed. Psychoanalysis—both in its phenomenological version and in its most structuralist one—never became

[14] It continues to be so even today, in statistical terms or concerning indicators in which contemporary science is instituted.

[15] Among other reasons, due to its ability to produce interchangeable, marketable objects (Machin, 2010).

part of academic discourse until very recently, more for reasons of praxis and the rigidity of the instituted than for political decisions[16].

In most Latin American countries, almost except for Argentina and some academic spaces in Brazil, where psychoanalysis had a wide reception (Ben Plotkin, 1996), and in Cuba, with the influence for several decades of the Cultural Historical Approach and Marxism[17], positivism was until very recently the dominant trend in psychology[18]. However, in this context, community praxis beyond the academy, as Maritza Montero (1998) points out, facilitated the penetration of other forms of knowledge production and created cultivation in this way for future emergence in academic discourse. On the other hand, as in the USA and many European countries, the departments of humanities, schools of philosophy, philology, and art criticism gave room to other authors, questions, and reflections; at a certain point, they ended up contaminating the chairs of social psychology as well. In this way, thinking today about violence, gender, or social movements, it is impossible to do it apart from a list of perspectives so diverse, rich, and in many cases contradictory and even antagonistic[19].

This diversification, as we mentioned, sometimes almost syncretic, nevertheless contributed to the diversification of the field of social psychology and in turn to the emergence of previously unexpected swings in it.

In this sense, it was proposed, regarding the transformations in the studies of identities, to review its evolution as a *logbook* to understand the epistemic traits that social psychology has adopted, in its transit through

[16] As was the case in the former USSR, Luria and Vigotsky had to abandon their ties with psychoanalysis for political reasons. Nevertheless, this "resignation" allowed Vigotsky to develop his rich theoretical apparatus still insufficiently known—or misinterpreted—from the so-called critical psychology on the other side of the Berlin wall.

[17] According to Pablo Guadarrama González (1986: 35-54).

[18] As happened for most social sciences and some humanities, review in this regard: Guadarrama (2004, 2011): 125-149).

[19] It happened contrary to all discursive logic or the explicit position of the authors themselves, even, against the current even of the original traditions that may have developed while ignoring each other—as if structuralism and hermeneutics—(Eco, 1992). Eco (1992) tells us how he distanced himself from Derrida, on the validity of the interpretations, regarding his request for a letter of adhesion. Derrida, on his part, lashes out with his own version, distancing himself from the theoretical perspective, both from Eco and Habermas, in communications to his students. However, nothing has prevented them from appearing cited and analyzed side by side in texts on specific topics, the same as Foucault with Derrida or Deleuze with Butler, even against the grain of all logic or discursive coherence (Machin, 1998), of the differences between the closure of interpretation and an opening of interpretation (Ferraris, 1981).

various "moment," not necessarily successive[20]: *identities as individual facts, identities as objective collective phenomena, identities as objective collective phenomena, identities as a subjective phenomenon, identities as a space of social tension, and identities as a process under construction.*

On the last of those places, we will stop briefly, for being one of the representatives of these new waves. At this time, we find authors from a phenomenological, structural, or critical episteme. Authors we lump together in this "moment" share, however, the dissolution of the idea of the collective/individual division to approach studies of phenomena of identity production at different levels. Instead, identity appears as the result of ephemeral social constructions. In this sense, the use of methods focused on the individual subject is combined with collective work methods, interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. It undoubtedly supposed the definitive renunciation of identities as something objective, represented, or representable, a renunciation of essentialisms. It means an emphasis on identities as ephemeral or fading—identities as indecisive and multi-determined phenomena. Identities under construction, to be deconstructed. But, mainly, identities as a result of the return of an unrepresented and unrepresentable remainder. The need is recognized, for its elucidation, of the return to other disciplines such as philosophy (Tucker, 2014) or anthropology. It results from popular knowledge and social movements, the feminisms, and queer theory[21], among others. This last

[20] You can review the work, Machin (2014) *Identities as a logbook of the epistemic trends of research in Social Psychology*, from which we extract a synthesis of the stages not discussed in this chapter: "Identities as individual facts: From an episteme positivist centered on the subject/individual, Identity as a result of the influence of others on the individual, Use of experimental methods, Confidence in the "objectivity" of identities. Identities as objective collective phenomena: Although they were also maintained from a positivist episteme, now they were going to look for the phenomenon centered on the collective—group/community/social/national identity. Identity appears in this case as a result of social interactions, national and cultural traits. Maintained the use of experimental methods and were incorporated the questionnaires and mass application tests. Of course, there is confidence in the "objectivity" of identities and an essentialist proposal. However, they were the first steps towards a psychosocial approach. Identities as a subjective phenomenon: A phenomenological or structural episteme focused on the collective—group/community / social/national identity. Identity as a result of social construction. Use of methods centered on the individual and collective subject, interviews, focus groups, participant observation. Emphasis on the subjective nature of identities. Result of the contribution of symbolic interactionism and social constructionism."

[21] Hammack, one of the best representatives of this trend, describes it from what he calls the queer axiom (Hammack et al., 2019).

moment, representative of the new waves, appropriates those approaches that understand "identity" as never fully constituted, of the developments of Jean Luc-Nancy when proposing identity as becoming rather than as being, or define it, closer to Butler[22], as a performative instance (Hammack et al., 2019).

According to several of its authors, criticism of identity in being was one of the pillars of this turn, according to which seeing something in the order of Being, and not of transition, of transit, of becoming, will have. In addition to the epistemic limitation, that emphasis complies with an etic problem: it stigmatizing the subjects. The assignment of traits to the "subject," to the group, to the "structure"—of any level and order—has epistemic limitations that put structuralism in question and place it on the same side of positivism, despite its attempt to get out of this framework thru the return to the Freudian concept of non-inscription. At the same time, it has the ethical cost of channeling the subjects, no longer in psychiatric categories, but now, structural ones.

For example, in this sense, the Heideggerianism of specific passages of Lacan, and some Lacanians, appropriate it from a place that constitutes the renunciation of the questioning of the subject. The epistemic itinerary that Parker, Zizek or even Nancy or Butler rescue; associated with the possibility of questioning the "subject" itself (Parker, 2009), of its universality in politics according to Zizek; of the body (Butler, 1993)[23]; or the identity in its temporal sense[24]; as oppositional or dualistic[25] according to Nancy

[22] Despite their differences, Judith Butler, Slavoj Zizek, and Ernesto Laclau declare that they agree in stating that the "'identity' itself is never fully constituted; in fact, since identification is not reducible to identity, it is important to consider the incommensurability or gap between them" (Butler et al., 2000: 1).

[23] In *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality. Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, Butler, Zizek, and Laclau point to revising the universality. That links Zizek to the political. Yet, at the same time, he relates Butler to the unrealizable of the subject in discourse. With significant differences among each other on the question of the "subject": (…) "There are significant differences among us on the question of the "subject", and this comes through as (…) we each attempt to take account of what constitutes or conditions the failure of any claim to identity to achieve final or full determination" (Butler et al., 2000: 2).

[24] Nancy points to the ephemeral identity, as revealed in its construction process, and that dissolves at that very moment.

[25] Nancy (2007) returns to this problem in the prologue to the Spanish edition of *58 indicios sobre el cuerpo, Extensión del alma*, stressing the impossibility of a Cartesian dualism "(…) the body is foreign [estrangement] to the spirit only if this strangeness [étrangéreté] -and this strangeness [étrangeté]—are inscribed in the heart of egoic intimacy and thus allow him to

(2007) are some of the best examples of that tradition. The structural, in its moment of continuity, renounces the tradition in which the Freudian work is inscribed. Freud proposes an episteme of the discontinuity of the subject, as a feature that makes possible the emergence of the living human (ζωον) (Canguilhem, 1968) and its forms of Being (Foucault, 1969) as well as possible approaches to knowledge about him (Bacherlard, 1971).

Thus, one of the most significant consequences, for one of the epistemic turns of these new waves in social psychology, is related to this continuous return of the non-registration of the subject in the networks, as recognition of his discontinuous being, of the various forms of manifestation of that discontinuity, and of that non-inscription in culture.

Several of the approaches to these problematic marriages between epistemes, in particular the Freudian and Marxist (Machin, 1998), reappear in Castoriadis's work, via the concept of social imaginary and its inscription in the institutional, not absent of contradictions when it has to address the unrepresentable and its signs in culture. The solution he offers is precisely in finding in the institutionable, not instituted, forms of expression of the imaginary beyond the objective (Machin, 2000; 2011 (2005), which are, however, a non-Marxist parenthesis of his work. The costs of the non-assimilation of these passages from Castoriadis's work—by some sociologists who made it positive—are analyzed in Chap. 6.

The Renunciation of Methodological "Aseptic-ism"

The field of the "methodological" was undoubtedly one of the most favored with these new waves. Academic researchers of social psychology of almost the entire twentieth century pursued the ideal of the non-contamination of the researcher with his field. The renunciation of this ideal was a visible crest in these new swells.

Not only was relegated this epistemic position of the aseptic research, a paradigm of the nineteenth-century exact and natural sciences—which social psychology copied—but was dissolved, the entire rigid methodological apparatus associated with it. Today, it is difficult to find someone who demands that the researcher not be contaminated with the "object" or study subjects. As has been commented in other places, this

relate to himself [á soi] while connecting to the world (in truth, these two relationships are inseparable)" [In Spanish in the original, translation by us].

contamination, recognized since the first decade of the twentieth century by physics[26], took almost a century more to reach social psychology.

It is worth mentioning that the costs of this turn—pointed out by Devereux in From Anxiety to Method—are not only ethical but epistemic and theoretical. In this sense, various assertions, prior or contemporary to the behavioral and positivist period of social psychology[27], are later taken up under the euphemistic label of "situated knowledge," evading, on the one hand, the discussion about the social and historical determination within Marxism[28], they were the first step in recognition of the referentiality of all knowledge[29] and the incorporation of great methodological diversity that some of the authors who collaborate with the text they try to illustrate.

This "pollution" of the knowledge also affects the diversification of knowledge since essentialisms are no longer "the alternative." In this sense, the legitimation of this contamination in the production of knowledge could only have occurred due to the death of the meta-stories. Still, at the same time, thanks to its existence, since before them, it would only have appeared as an undifferentiated part of the knowledge about man and his cultural/natural insertion.

[26] The Heisenberg uncertainty principle is one of the most cited, but in reality, it was the beginning of the fracture with the idea of continuity for physics. In the same way, he favored the position that faced the traditional asepsis of the researcher in his relation to the object of study in the exact and natural sciences.

[27] Canguilhem's alert about oblivion "concerning historical circumstances and the social media in which they are led to propose their methods or techniques and make their services accepted" by behavioral psychologists coincides with Vigotsky's ideas. It also conduces to Vigotsky to propose that all psychology was social. Later, Enrique Pichon-Riviere followed a similar path to affirm a Social Psychoanalysis.

[28] On some of Marx's statements that, which gave rise to later discussions, review, for example, Marx, K (1857-1858: 234).

[29] Philip Hammack, for example, illustrates the perspective offered by the queer perspective by proposing an episteme of open axiom, which transitions from an essentialist perspective of intimacy to a contextual one: "The queer axiom of open possibility shifts our epistemology from one concerned with essential intelligibility of human intimacy in some transhistorical form to one fundamentally concerned with meaning in context" (Hammack et al., 2019: 583).

The Legitimation of Other Cultural Knowledge

This legitimation appeared closely related to the epistemic diversification that, in a way, pluralized and democratized the field of social psychology and, on the other hand, contributed to order the indiscriminate production of apparently diverse currents, authors and theories, a legitimation of knowledge which occurred "popular" (Teo, 2018). At the same time, it is a relative of a new twist to the construction that this epistemic ordering supposed on the theoretical diversity of social psychology after the crisis of positivism.

In this sense, it is appropriate to recognize Teo (2018) that the legitimation[30] of social knowledge came to attenuate the epistemic violence established for several decades by academic positivism. According to Held (2019), epistemic violence would not be rectified only with the recognition of "other" or folk knowledge, which would constitute a certain risk of naive conception about folk knowledge and the neutrality of its effects in some themes like discrimination[31]. She proposes the adequacy and circumscription of the contextual validity of the knowledge: "On my interpretation, homogenization here entails epistemic violence" (Held, 2019: 3).

Probably, the confusion of many psychologists, self-named "critics," arises from the erroneous interpretation of the Vigostkian approach on folk knowledge. In Vigotsky, the concepts related to an eventual epistemology—zone of proximal development, social situation of development, or experience—are concepts related to the link. In this sense, if you want to associate it with the so-called critical psychology, it must be done to understand this as an episteme of linking knowledge. From the parents of the critical approach, it also points to procedures based on the gnoseological bond. For the timely appreciation of this type of knowledge, Devereux (1967) proposes recognizing the transference as data as a result of

[30] In truth, it's relegitimization because these always existed as part of the discourses about the man and his relationship with himself and nature; they were relegated as a result of the predominance of scientism in psychology.

[31] "We should of course investigate the bases for selection of all concepts and conceptions in psychology. But this does not entail a clear line of demarcation between folk concepts from below and expert concepts from above. If by "from above" Teo means only the concepts that are selected by scientists for their fit with questionable regulatory purposes, then the worry is not (a) the folksy vs. scientific nature of the concepts themselves, but rather (b) the reasons for their selection, which implicate the ways in which group differences are interpreted and the real-world purposes to which those interpretations are put" (Held, 2019: 5).

knowledge on the link on the researcher's side. There is no denial of the real, as some authors said, but recognition of the real as current and active, from the reading in the subject of the emergencies of the bond, with other subjects, with culture, and with nature.

The Transition from One Era of Logos to Another of Transformative Praxis and Creation

Much has been written about this topic, particularly from Latin American community social psychology and gender studies/interventions in social psychology. As anticipated in the conception of the social imaginary in Castoriadis (1987, 1994, 2015), and some developments of that concept in Latin America (Machin, 2006; 2012); transform and perform reality, rather than ideals—contained in the moral imperative—constitute a need for the social psychologist as a subject. It has antecedents in Marx's idea of realization[32], in whose work this bet remained unfinished, as well as in Vigostsky's for social psychology (1962; 1978; 2004). Undoubtedly, any of the twentieth-century versions of the dominant *episteme* in social psychology remained in the emphasis of reproduction—which in Marxism has its cardinal sin in the supposed "Lenin theory of knowledge." Gergen's anti-representationism theses were the spearhead for social psychology that ended, in some cases, at the subjective extreme of creationism (Gergen, 2014).

In this book, you will find on this subject essential updates to these discussions in the texts of Beatriz Macías (Chap. 2), Claudia Calquín and Iván Torres (Chap. 8), and some sections of Chap. 6, praxis and return of the imaginary, and 10, validation of the current creation of the subject in the networks.

The *political axis of the constant struggle for legitimizing the diversity of theoretical and methodological currents in social psychology* is another of the most definitely visible features of these waves. At some point, we commented that the way out of the so-called crisis of social psychology had involved at least three alternatives: following the mainstream, consolidating it, and adapting it to new social and disciplinary demands; build new disciplinary fields closed on themselves, with political interest for

[32] See, for example, *Grundrisse* TII, Pgs. 2. 3. 4; 457, on the relationship between objectification and subjectivation as a function of the temporal axis and the idea of subjective as potentiality; and TII, p. 162, on the absence of mediation.

professional associations, but relatively little significance for the set of disciplinary knowledge and even less for society and culture; or to critically transform the objects, the episteme, the methods, the theoretical foundations, and the ethics of the traditional perspective of social psychology, without imposing previous disciplinary and epistemic limits.

According to various authors (Gergen, 1982; Domènech & Ibañez, 1998; Íñiguez-Rueda, 2003; Machin, 2010), after the crisis of traditional social psychology, in the academic context, there were still those who preferred to remain attached to the mainstream, with the same concepts and problems, with a similar positivist approach, but consolidating and adapting it to the new disciplinary and social demands.

In some contemporary works, it is evident that the alternative of restructuring consolidated fields and theories is still a trend, at the time anticipated by Lakatos[33] as a way of updating the theoretical corpus of a paradigm to preserve its core. In this sense, one can find works such as those of Gergen on social constructionism (Gergen, 1999) or those of Jonathan Potter (2011) on discursive psychology or others that update the concepts of the traditional theoretical field[34] of social psychology in contemporary discussions.

The emergence of new guilds, around the reification of approaches, epistemologically different from those of traditional social psychology, but just as closed in on themselves as traditional social psychology when it was mainstream (Crespo, 1995; Machin, 1998), is one of the riskiest trends for the future development of social psychology. In the presentation of his book, Thomas Teo comments[35] that his texts had appeared in magazines rather than in books because he belonged to a psychology department, whose academic practices recommended the publication of papers; before

[33] In particular, in several of his works, his lecture—and transcription—from 1973 can be reviewed as one of his most clear communications on the dynamics and particularities of "research programs."

[34] The lector can review the attempt to re-legitimize discursive social psychology by updating the traditional concept of attitude in social psychology in Potter, Jonathan; Hepburn, Alexa & Edwards, Derek (2020: 336-356).

[35] "Psychology, in emulating the natural sciences and not the humanities, the arts, or the concept driven social sciences, has copied many of the subcultural practices of the natural sciences. One important custom is the primacy of peer-reviewed journal articles over book publications that have remained central in many of the humanities. Because I work in a psychology department and sometimes begrudgingly follow the rules of the disciplinary game, some ideas presented in this book have been published in journals, book chapters, and conference presentations" (Teo, 2018).

publishing long texts such as suggested by the humanities departments. This statement, made casually, is not minor; it is a common fact in many academic contexts, which have closed themselves off from new forms of legitimacy that drive the evolution of diverse forms of knowledge complex due to their rigidity and cloistering. The scientific departments limit establishing validation rules of their academics, with bibliometric indicators associated with specific publications. Others, with a humanities aspect, do it with the emphasis on philosophical texts of the current or inclination of that guild. In all of them, other more subtle practices[36], such as the devaluation of the use of specific authors or styles, alien to those who lead the culture or the institutional unconscious, are comfortable for them; they establish rigid criteria of discipline and legitimation, which the new tendencies of social psychology try to fracture systematically. In this sense, we see philosophical texts appear in journals or communications from psychology congresses, as presentations close to anthropology or social sciences, or sociology in legitimate spaces for philosophy, not without discomfort for the walls of the instituted[37].

Finally, a third way out of the crisis of social psychology can be mentioned, represented in those who chose to legitimize objects, problems, epistemes, theories, and methods, which, although they had existed long before, now had the explicit purpose of transforming the foundations of

[36] Foucault's concepts of "alethurgy," or rituals, are inexorably linked to every institution in a more or less visible way. In Foucault's alethurgy, several authors associate it with his 1983 redefinition "(…) the act by which the truth is manifested (…)" (Foucault, 2010 (1984), p. 19); however, if we review his previous course from 1979 to 1980, we end up understanding later in his analysis as something that transcends the act to grouping ritualized practices "(…) the rites and procedures of veridiction (…)" (p. 66) "(…) that set of procedures and say (…)," which ensure belonging to specific communities, with varying degrees of institutionalization, is an essential advance in the identification of cultural processes apparently alien to the recognized traits for academic unions, but as effective as the rituals instituted in norms and protocols, insofar as "(…) there is no exercise of power without something that resembles it" (Foucault, 2014 (1984): 67). In Castoriadis, there are several passages in his work on the idea of how rituals "drive" institutions and their practices, but particular interest can be seen in the chapter "The institution and the imaginary" of his work. In it he puts religion as an example, as a paradigmatic case of what is instituted. Armando Bauleo (1994—unpublished lecture notes), a follower of Enrique Pichon Riviere's work, works from the concept of the "institutional unconscious," the process of constitution of practices governed by norms that sustain the institution beyond what is instituted.

[37] Greater length and other scenes on the subject can be reviewed in the communication: Machin (2018). Clinic, politics and university (s); subordinações, sobreposições e tensões. Roteiro for a contemporary setting.

social psychology and blur its limits (Machin, 2020). It is this third way that we have tried to document in this chapter and this book and which provides that character of relational, political, and social creation and action to the knowledge of social psychology (Gergen, 2014; Bhatia, 2015; Teo, 2018; Tucker, 2018; Hammack et al., 2019). As we discussed before, these waves always bring their hangovers. If we review the proposal, Teo (2018) when referring to critical social psychology as an alternative to the epistemic violence of academic knowledge, in its legitimate attempt to democratize knowledge, supposes a symmetry of theoretical knowledge/folk knowledge in the definition of the "critical,"[38] hardly sustainable without falling into trivialization in the construction of knowledge (Held (2019)).

The Question About General Psychology as a Possibility Revisited

One aside, they require other emerging features, as they are relatively more controversial in themselves but no less emerging when these *new waves* are visualized. One of the unmistakable signs of these *new waves* is undoubtedly the way to revisit the question of the possibility of a general or individual psychology[39]. Although the discussion of this topic exceeds the purpose of this chapter[40], it is necessary to remark some elements which contributed to these *new waves* of social psychology.

As part of this return to the origins of social psychology, the recognition arises in most currents in psychology that are recognized as "social" or "cultural" that the processes that are studied are no longer "individual." Although this was an idea in many of its founders[41] and later became a common idea in social psychology, it was far from the consequences for psychology. Nevertheless, the question now exceeds the statements for

[38] On this subject, the contribution to the discussion of the work of Beatriz Macías, contained in this book, is fascinating.

[39] See the works of Hammack et al. (2019), Parker (2009), el Teo (2018), and Potter et al. (2020), among others.

[40] It is evaluated in Chap. 1 of a book of Machin, R (Ed.) The general psychology examined, still unpublished.

[41] Vigotsky (1927), Freud (1929-30), and also, of course, in the first sociologists, who contributed to the emergence of the field of social psychology, or some of the parent anthropologists of several of the current trends in social psychology such as George Devereux (1967), among others.

social psychology itself. It takes up this in its repercussions for psychopathology, health psychology, medicalization processes, judicial psychology, and even studies of mental processes of such traditions far from this as the so-called neurosciences.

The "individual" will cease to exist, for most of these trends that we include here in *new waves*. It will cease to exist, on the one hand, because precisely that which we call undivided will not be more than an illusion both of the subjects themselves and of the society that inoculates that phantom in those subjects. But secondly, it will not exist since every process considered "individual" has its origin and destination in a connecting, cultural, and social space.

Vigotsky, in his early works, doubted the need for social psychology, whereas all psychology was social. On the other hand, his own work is a sample of this. Most of his concepts, rather than allude to the individual, refer to the relationship of some individuals with others. Then, the later developments of his work show the procedures in which that called "social" is verified, by understanding, for example, that psychological processes occur twice, once on the outside—of the subject—and another on the inside[42]. In the same way, when dealing with "object relations," he analyzes that from the moment the adult gives him an object to the child, he gives him more than an object; he is given all the culture that this object embodies. Thus, for Vigotsky (1925; 1927; 1978), the adult would be in charge of unravelling those cultural processes embodied in the thing for the child. On the other hand, when referring to the social function of interaction with objects, he recognizes the character of a social entity to any natural thing. It appears from the beginning of human life as a simulation mechanism and at the same time abstraction -or representation- of the functions that he will do with them. Thus, a stick can be a comb, even when with it only the hairstyle occurs virtually.

In Freud's case, James Strachey shows us how the evolution of his work led, first, to the recognition of the extraction of the norms of culture from the first object relations[43]. From the first sensations, in the child, according to Freud, these influences are inseparable. And then, in the process of

[42] A division that he proposes as provisional, and that finds its moment of synthesis in the concept of the *social situation of development*, condenses his reflections on human development and adheres to a monism that denies an eventual dualism didactic purposes—in his work.

[43] Review James Strachey's "Introduction" to Freud, Sigmund (Freud, 1930 [1929]) The malaise in culture, Freud, Sigmund, Complete Works, T XXI.

separating external sensations, from those received from their internal organs[44], painful incorporation into culture appears. Freud supposes an operation of "discernment" to this separation, which is usually forgotten, but which will nevertheless be one of the features of the human being, differentiated from the rest of the animals. In the same way, when recognizing the claim that the child must make to recover that which comes from the other, he fully incorporates it as being painfully linked. In this work[45], Freud ends up giving civilization its preponderant role in every constitution of the psychic apparatus. Thus, the entire text of "Civilization and Its Discontents" goes through that ambivalence of recognizing the linking nature of the human symptom while trying to ask about the determination in "the human" of that disposition to the relational as symptomatic[46].

In any of the cases, a longing for returning to the discernment of that bond, and of the consequences in terms of symptoms, emergencies, and processes in the individual, of that primordial bond is identified in many of the social psychologists who write today; either through subjectivity-objectivity, culture-nature dichotomies, or contemporary monisms (Tucker, 2018; Teo, 2018; Hammack et al., 2019; Potter et al., 2020).

In the same way, interesting reflections on the *sources of knowledge in human sciences* have appeared in this *sea*; some of them will be discussed in Chap. 6, but we do not want to stop highlighting here some of the destinations towards which they point. In principle, it seems to tell us that to believe in the documents, which were written by people, rather than the word of the people, is at least naive, if not hypocritical, mercenary, and so

[44] "You must be most intensely impressed by the fact that many of the sources of excitement from which you will later discern your bodily organs can send you sensations at all times, while others—and among them the most desired: the mother's breast—They temporarily remove him, and he only manages to recover them by bellowing in demand for assistance. In this way, an "object" as opposed to the self for the first time is something that is "outside" and only through a particular action is it forced to appear" (Freud, 1929-Freud, 1930: 67-68).

[45] But that had been a constant throughout his work and has as its antecedents other texts from other texts such as "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1920) or "Totem and Taboo" (1913 [1912]), to only cite some texts outside of his well-knowns "cultural works."

[46] According to Freud, "the extent to which culture is built on the renunciation of the instinct cannot be ignored" (p. 96). In this way, he affirms that this "(…) "cultural denial" governs the vast sphere of links social among men" (p. 96) while calling us to "ask ourselves about the influences to which cultural development owes its origin, the mode of its genesis and what commanded its course" (p. 97).

on. In human cultural products, there is not one that could be considered privileged, just as their material works are not, nor is language, their own body, or their associations, their feelings or sensations about themselves and what affects them (impacts, impresses). This renunciation of the eventual reification of specific sources, which could also be considered part of that process of delegitimization/legitimation mentioned earlier, also has consequences for the multiplication of data and methods for social psychology.

Forwards

By way of "things to come"[47], we would like to return at least to social psychology and its connection with other disciplines in this work.

The fact that the so-called sociological social psychology has been privileged and recognized as such, after the crisis of the experimental period of psychology, was not the result of chance, several factors came together in it: the letter of recognition that sociology had been having in the universities and in the social world, a certain marginality that anthropology had given itself, the relegation of philosophy and linguistics to schools of the humanities, while psychology remained in those of social sciences.

This panorama has changed. It has become rarefied, also due to social change, the contamination of knowledge through technology, among society in general and in schools and faculties themselves, where the same can be seen in schools that try to marginalize the psychoanalysis or philosophy, like others, to any manifestation of "rationalist" psychology. This degree of contamination and controversy has served psychology understood as social psychology well in a certain sense: its objects and legitimate fields of study have been diversified, its interpretive theoretical sources considered valid have been diversified, its methods have been mixed, they have trans-disciplinary spaces appeared, which are carried out in the object of study itself, beyond the disciplinary origins of its researchers, its theoretical references or its data collection procedures, and even what could

[47] I also take up this term here, as a tribute to Kenneth Gergen, and his words when he graciously agreed to make the prologue to this book, after unexpected situations in his life prevented him from participating as one of the authors with a chapter, as we had planned between 2019 and 2020: "… it's been an enormously difficult year for me (…) and your work somehow lives now into the future." "I am glad I can participate(…)." "I shall look forward…" Ken (Correspondencia entre el 12 de marzo y el 5 de abril de 2021).

properly be considered as data, have been erased, hopefully in the future, the rigid boundaries of the disciplines.

This book will try to show some of those movements in the disciplinary boundaries that these new waves have erased, hopefully for enough time to make the substance of this new "*ajiaco*" be cooked fully.

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CHAPTER 2

Critical Psychology for Community Emancipation: Insights from Socio-educative Praxis in Hybrid Settings

Beatriz Macías-Gómez-Estern

Critical Psychology as an Epistemological Framework for Political Action

As far as my father was concerned, the doctor's job was to investigate, to understand the relationships between the economic situation and public health, to stop being a 'wizard' and to become a social activist and a scientist (….). He was infuriated by people who wanted to simply "treat" typhoid, rather than prevent it with good hygiene. He was exasperated by the "wonderful cures" and "new injections" that doctors gave to their "private clientele" who paid for expensive consultations. And, likewise, he rejected those who "healed" children, instead of addressing the true causes of their diseases, many of which were social.

—El olvido que seremos [Forgotten We'll Be] (Héctor Abad Facioline)

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I begin this chapter with the words of Colombian writer Héctor Abad Facioline, citing his father, the public health specialist and human rights activist who was murdered in Medellín in 1987. His ideas on the meaning and scope of medicine as a practice fit perfectly with what we shall discuss regarding psychology and about what it means for Critical Psychology as a movement.

With this contribution to the volume, I wish to share my understanding of this question, gained from debates and discussions, from research and teaching practice and from participation in community development processes with "other" populations (at times, depending on the context, I was the one described as "other"). These reflections are grounded in the polarised standpoints observed in the confrontations and/or synergies arising from day-by-day interactions between people and groups who have been socialised under different logics and different ways of thinking and functioning. As an attempt to escape from static portraits of human identifications, my proposal is based on real-world situations and on the idea that no theorisation or conceptualisation of the human mind should be isolated from the particular conditions and activities in which people are involved, including the research study or professional activity in question.

From these considerations, I go on to explore the possibilities of transformation and emancipation that emerge from hybrid activity scenarios, where there is greater potential for transitioning between different forms of knowledge and understanding and for making creative use of psychological tools (Wertsch, 2009). These processes are illustrated by examples such as an analysis of the "frontier crossing" experienced by university students taking part in service learning projects with Roma children in the Spanish regions of Andalusia and Catalonia (Lalueza & Macías-Gómez-Estern, 2020). I present these examples as typical situations that might inspire movement towards an emancipatory psychology.

The epistemological theoretical umbrella overlying these reflections is that of Critical Psychology. To overview its main principles, I will outline some of the areas addressed in diverse strands of research into this discipline, observing the dilemmas that arise and transmitting the claims made. In Critical Psychology, ethical and political questions are raised concerning the contributions made by psychology, from its normative model of psychological functions to the oppression of "different" people. These insights are of particular significance in today's globalised world, in which the possibilities of otherness are multiplied by the explosive growth in

international migration (Castles, 1998) and by the mediation of information and communication technologies (Gergen, 1991).

Many authors have argued that careful scrutiny is needed of the close relationships that have always existed between knowledge generation and practice in the field of psychology, from the outset, and the dynamics of oppression exercised by the capitalist system. At different periods and in different spheres of psychological thought, voices have been raised in this regard, spurred by particular social situations and/or intellectual currents. In this respect, David Pavón-Cuellar (2019) indicates that Critical Psychology is diffused by nature and cannot be considered either a field of the discipline or an application of it but rather:

> … a critical relationship of psychology with itself. It could also be described metaphorically as the bad conscience of psychology, as the high court of its self-awareness, as the element within that subjects it to scrutiny, that doubts and mistrusts what it is, that watches over it and that eventually unmasks it. Unmasked by its critical instance, psychology is revealed to us, for example, as pseudoscience, as an ideological instrument or as a disciplinary device, as the destruction of what it studies or as the dissembler of what exists. (2019, p. 20)

Critical Psychology has developed and evolved in parallel with broader movements such as Critical Theory, which is found throughout the social sciences, the humanities and philosophy (Fair, 2013; Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002; Seco-Martínez, 2017). From the latter standpoint, which is also multifaceted and multisited, both historically and geographically, Critical Psychology presents a fundamental critique of the scientific objectivism that defends the rationality of modernity and affirms an epistemology that places the subject, the practice and the circumstances of human action at the centre of the analytical gaze.

Without necessarily using those terms, various thinkers dating back to the 1960s have prepared the ground for a paradigm shift in scientific endeavour (Kuhn, 2012). Forerunners of this changing course were the trails blazed by the Frankfurt School (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002) in Europe and by the Latin American liberation movements, which in turn were inspired by the regional thought and politics arising from a reflexive corpus generated with the constitution of new nations (focusing on the dilemmas of modernity and on the subordination of indigenous societies) (Rojo, 2012; Hinkelammert, 1981; Santos, 2003). In this respect, let us

borrow the very apt expression coined by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2003)—without claiming it fully represents these broad and complex movements but in the belief that it provides a clear, succinct image of what is proposed in Critical Theory and that it echoes the shortcomings of psychological science. Santos inquires whether we, as intellectuals and social agents, are willing (indeed, whether we can afford) to continue "wasting experience" in pursuit of absolutist, static and objectivist theorisations that in no way represent personal realities and that contribute little to personal well-being. The metaphor of "wasted experience" is especially illustrative of the criticisms levelled by Critical Psychology that traditional investigation is too often undertaken from the exclusive standpoint of researchers who are Western, white, male, literate and heterosexual and whose explanation of the human psyche is inclined to "waste" (and disparage) subjects who do not fit this template.

In the 1920s, Soviet researchers, taking a Historic-Cultural Approach in their investigations of the mind (Vigotsky, 1978; Luria, 1987), demonstrated the socio-cultural roots of the higher psychological processes, pioneering the identification and empirical evidence of factors influencing the practical application of cognitive abilities. In a disciplinary environment in which the fundamental aim of psychology (following the logic of the natural, experimental sciences) was to isolate the individual and the "atoms" of experience in order to study the mind without external "contamination", Vigotsky and Luria's proposal was the forerunner of today's clamorous (and majority) opinions on the impossibility of separating persons from their context. Moreover, unlike traditional social psychology, which considered "the social aspect" as an "independent variable" influencing cognitive processes, thus separating and dissecting the two, Vigotsky and Luria hypothesised a dialectical process of mutual impact, whereby the individual is the agent of the social sphere, which in turn originates and constitutes the essence of the individual. The ideas of Soviet authors were not widely known in mainstream Western psychological thought until the 1980s, when translations by Michael Cole (1998) and Wertsch (2009) were published. Historic-Cultural Psychology was also introduced in Western psychology through the writings of contemporary Cuban researchers who studied in the Soviet Union, such as Fernando L. González Rey (2017) and Carolina de la Torre (2008). Nevertheless, the imprint of these ideas was clearly present in later calls for a change of perspective in psychological thought. Historic-cultural psychology remains an active focus of attention among an extensive and prolific academic community (which has

generated an International Scientific Society, ISCAR, and journals such as "Mind, Culture and Activity" and "Learning, Culture and Social Interaction") and is one of the greatest providers of the rigorous, empirical findings and scientific debate from which Critical Psychology draws today.

Subsequent to the studies of Vigotsky and Luria, and clearly inspired by them, a critical current of psychological thought emerged in Germany, with authors such as Klaus Holzkamp (2016), Thomas Teo (1998), Ernst Schraube and Ute Osterkamp (2013) and Santiago Vollmer (2015). At the Free University of Berlin, Holzkamp developed a line of thought that revived a Marxist perspective on relationships between the individual and society, in an approach closely aligned with that of Adorno's recently proposed Critical Theory. While distancing himself from the idealism in which the subject is isolated from factors of social and historical conditioning, Holzkamp re-interpreted various central tenets of psychology, restoring the subject's hitherto neglected action, intentionality and need for agency. Under his approach, it is assumed that subjects can take control of their lives and of the means required to enhance their well-being and that this "capacity for action" extends to include collaboration with others (Cerana et al., 2015). Holzkamp criticises traditional psychology for limiting itself to the "conditions of possibility" imposed by social, cultural and historical forces, which constrain action and merely provide means of adapting (subordinating oneself) to them, rather than fostering emancipatory action to detect, question and extend these conditions via collective measures. This standpoint redefines both the framework for interpreting psychological processes such as motivation, mental development or teaching-learning and also the experimental approach that results in the dehumanisation of the "object of analysis" of psychology, among other issues. In general, Holzkamp accuses traditional psychology of being a tool by which power is exerted and a weapon for the perpetuation of capitalism, by limiting the causes and treatments of human suffering to the psychological arena whilst ignoring the oppressive realities which, in most situations, are the source of this suffering (Pavón-Cuellar, 2019).

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to give an exhaustive overview of current developments and contributions of Critical Psychology to the general context of psychology (for more comprehensive accounts, see Van IJzendoorn & Van der Veer 1984; Fox et al., 2009; Parker, 2015; and Ratner, 2019). A wealth of theoretical and empirical studies in this area have been made, and many highly significant practical considerations have

been raised. In this respect, most studies have focused on Anglo-Saxon contexts, such as those developed by theorists in Radical Psychology (Brown, 1973; Wexler, 1983) and in Social Constructivism (Gergen, 1994; Edwards & Potter 1992). The latter thinking is clearly present within the field of Social Psychology, reflected in what has been termed Critical Social Psychology, in papers by Tomás Ibáñez and Lupicinio Íñiguez (1997) in Spain. We will not dwell further on these lines of thought, because extensive accounts have already been given of their defining features and of the contributions made.

There is, however, a source of inspiration for what we now call Critical Psychology that I am obliged to mention, as work in this field has provided the backdrop for my own learning and socialisation experiences in socially committed research. Since the 1960s, Latin American psychology has been a fruitful context of activism and studies of the real problems of poverty, stigma, and subalternity experienced by communities throughout the continent: a gaze and an activism rooted in the everyday realities of the subjects and communities defined by traditional psychology (Maritza Montero, 2004). In fact, Latin American psychology has always drawn inspiration from politics and from the protest movements of the regions; it has always been involved in action, without setting boundaries between academic disciplines, and has incorporated discourses on historical, sociological, anthropological and political movements for the emancipation of subjugated communities. From this stance of direct action, community psychologists (Montero, 2010) and liberation psychologists (Martín-Baró, 1998) have worked hand in hand with other activists to denounce the subordination of communities, rejecting the individualistic and bourgeois notions and models imposed by traditional psychology. As discussed above, the line of psychology developed in Cuba plays a significant role in dialogue and in social and political praxis (De la Torre, 2008; González Rey, 2017; Pañellas & Cabrera, 2020) as a vital part of Latin American psychology but also seasoned with a direct connection to Vigotsky and Luria's epistemology of psychology, a school in which many young Cuban psychologists first were trained as researchers.

Drawing from all the sources of inspiration previously developed, the term "Critical Psychology" is currently used as an umbrella term designating approaches that include community psychology, historic-cultural psychology, psychoanalysis, indigenous psychology (Sundararajan, 2014) and poststructuralist and feminist views (Parker, 2015; Fox et al., 2009). Critical Psychology encompasses all the voices contrary to the

unambiguous objectification of the subject that is presented when psychological science adopts the position and the discourse of the Western, male, white, literate, heterosexual subject (Pavón-Cuellar, 2019). Despite the heterogeneity of influences and sources within what is now termed Critical Psychology, certain features can be extracted and considered common to all. Nevertheless, the definition presented has no claim to be universal; rather, it is a simplification, but one that matches the scope of my proposal.

1. The inseparability of mind and culture-society. According to all currents of critical thought in psychology, the origins of human psychological processes (memory, attention, perception, emotions, intelligence, psychopathological categories, etc.) are located within spheres that transcend the individual. As observed above, this reality cannot be expressed merely by considering the social context as an independent variable. Critical psychologists affirm that human nature cannot be calibrated without taking into consideration the fact that it is permanently associated with the activities, cultural practices, social and historical dynamics that surround and imbue humankind. Any view that detaches individuals from the scenarios in which their participation takes place will inevitably be biased and incomplete. Moreover, any analysis that draws psychological categories from an understanding of individuals in certain socio-historical and cultural contexts and seeks to impose them on individuals in other contexts will inevitably be inappropriate. From this perspective, traditional psychology has erred in over-promoting individualism, detaching subjects from their circumstances and attempting to apply the rules governing a very specific construct (Western, male, white, literate, heterosexual) to all other human realities.

2. The necessary commitment of psychology to the emancipatory movements of people and communities. Researchers in Critical Psychology, as a logical derivation of the idea that individuals are indelibly associated with their context, affirm that in order for mental health therapists to facilitate greater well-being of the individual, they must consider all the circumstances (family, social, community, political, cultural, economic, etc.) affecting this individual. In contrast, the tendency in traditional psychology has been to seek the causes of suffering or maladjustment within internal individual processes and thence to offer individual solutions, without identifying as problematic possible situations of oppression, inequality or social injustice. In consequence, the psychological tools proffered may enable adaptation to the environment, but no consideration is given to whether that same environment could be detrimental to personal and

social growth. Similarly, the therapist might unwittingly be ignoring certain responsibilities or dynamics generated by situations that impede physical and psychological development, such as social inequality and/or oppression. Therefore, advocates of Critical Psychology hold that this science, like other social sciences, should actively promote social justice, by contributing to raising awareness of real deprivation and its origins in social inequalities. Moreover, psychology should help empower communities to transform their conditions and not limit its scope to that of the individual's perceptions and his/her adaptation to realities. Their view is that Critical Psychology is political and must not remain aseptic, detached from social problems. An analysis based on Critical Psychology should include issues such as power relations and the dynamics of domination and submission among human groups. Many critical psychologists, indeed the majority (Parker, 2015; Ratner, 2019; Pavón-Cuellar, 2019), embrace anti-capitalist views and have expanded their analysis to observe in neoliberalist capitalism many of the seeds of the inequalities that generate human suffering. This majority view also considers traditional psychology both an accomplice and an instrument of this system, by locking individuals within their problems and isolating them from awareness of the external roots of their suffering and also from the possibility of engaging in social struggle beyond their own personal interest.

3. Recover the subject and praxis for psychological science. Psychology, in most of its contemporary forms of development, has sought to universalise and generalise human behaviour, doing so via studies based on large samples and statistical techniques. By linking the most extreme forms of scientism and the technologising of experimentation to the study of human beings, researchers have sought to make objective analyses of humans and their behaviour, detached from their specific circumstances. However, this approach has generated a type of knowledge, an artificial, formal "model of the individual", that in no way represents each of the subjects it claims to define. The observed individual has been "objectified" and, to an extent, dehumanised. This has led to the paradox that when real subjects are compared with the models generated by psychological studies, they are found to be incomplete or defective when the "measure of normality" is derived from an unreal model (Arocha, 2021). As an example of this problem, consider classical studies on thought processes, in which up to a point the way in which research subjects resolved problems was considered "defective", in comparison with the formal, logical solutions (typical of computer systems) taken as a model (Johnson-Laird, 1983). The

experimental scientific model has also led to the atomisation of the subject, producing compartmentalised study zones that are explored independently (such as the psychology of attention, memory, thought or emotions), without producing any integrated composition of the elements that actually constitute the subject. In consequence, abstracted on the one hand and compartmentalised on the other by classical psychological science, the subject finally becomes detached both from praxis and from intentions and desires, from the innate non-mechanical incorporation of culturally acquired motives (agency), infused with emotions (the great neglected area of classical psychology, in its deification of modern rationality). For all these reasons and more, critical psychologists (and this was one of Holkzham's main arguments) call for the psychological subject to be restored to psychology. In other words, we must both reflect the real-world nature of our "object of analysis" and at the same time ensure that our research and analysis include the essential contributions made by the observer in characterising the observed, given that in psychology both parties are human.

4. The need to use research methods that overcome research object-subject duality and do not gloss over human complexity. In general, researchers in Critical Psychology employ methods that overcome the deficiencies of traditional psychology that I have noted in this chapter, namely the objectification of the human subject, "wilful blindness" to the constituent socio-cultural realities of this subject and hence the different forms of "being and becoming" that escape modern rationality, the need to recognise that agency and emotionality form part of all psychological processes, incorporating the dynamics of power into the analysis conducted and the necessary acknowledgment of the dynamics of research, which itself is a human activity with its own rules, norms and hierarchies. Critical Psychology also seeks to highlight the role played by the "observing subject" (the researcher) in shaping the "observed subject" (sample, object of study). Taking this standpoint, a broad range of qualitative methods and participatory research studies (or "community-engaged research") have been deployed (Noffke & Somekh 2009; Gutiérrez, 2008). Practitioners in this field view research as a communicative process whereby the parties involved (researchers and objects of investigation) engage in a dialogue that should be evenly balanced, given the power dynamics existent between different spheres of knowledge and the will, if not to subvert them, at least to make them explicit and to minimise their consequences. Participatory researchers respect the voices of the persons being investigated and

facilitate their projection, expressing them in scientific language with the least possible distortion/transformation, sometimes employing explanatory models and language that is necessarily distanced from that of the predominant approach of scientism.

In short, Critical Psychology has revolutionised the discipline, from the bottom up and from inside out, in line with the paradigm shift that has shaken up the Social Sciences in response to the inability of the scienticist perspective to account for and be applied to the diversity of realities and experiences that constitute human actions and sentiments. In a world where people and communities socialised through different cultural traditions commonly coexist, whether face to face or via technologically mediated interactions, a different psychological science is needed. Such a science must be capable of viewing these diverse realities phenomenologically, without (as has previously been the case) imposing a norm based on a biased and partial model that "pathologises" all non-conformist existences, thus exerting epistemic violence on "different" subjects, on their suffering and on the remedies offered.

Dilemmas of Critical Psychology: A Specific Psychological Knowledge for Each Community?

Nevertheless, the critical whirlwind blowing through the fields of psychology has collided with internal debate, resistance and dilemmas. Voices have been raised concerning the dangers of making overly sharp distinctions between what critical psychologists have termed psychology *about the other* and psychology *from the other* (Teo, 2008), a metaphor that distils the discrepancies between traditional psychology and indigenous psychology (which has important points of contact with Critical Psychology). In this respect, Barbara Held (2019) is an eloquent defender of the validity and value of the knowledge obtained from objective psychology, especially in her description of phenomena of "otherness" and the generation of prejudices (specifically, referring to race). According to Held, it is not the scientific method itself that generates epistemic violence towards "other" subjectivities but rather the interested (oppressive) use made of the findings thus obtained. She goes on to argue that discarding the rigour of scientific methodology to include other modes of knowledge will not prevent such harmful uses of science. Making psychology more "folk",

from the standpoint of the people concerned, does not guarantee the elimination of violence towards "others". This author concludes:

> In challenging the falsity of these denigrating claims, those who seek progressively informed epistemologies may renounce all psychological knowledge based on objectivist epistemologies as itself oppressive. In this, aim is taken at the wrong target. The misappropriation of the mantle of objectivity does not necessitate true-for relativist knowledge—so long as psychological science proceeds with firm unpacking of historical and contemporary reasons for, including meanings and uses of, selected concepts and with appreciation of the fallibility and limits that inhere in all empirical endeavors. True-for relativist epistemologies do not own these virtues exclusively. (pp. 16–17)

When psychology is applied in culturally diverse communities and contexts, critical views of traditional psychology will inevitably arise. The analytical tools, categorisations and "remedies" hitherto proposed are found to be absurd when the social component of the human mind becomes apparent. Moreover, the oppressive complicity of the anathemas of psychology is striking, to say the least. As a researcher who has worked in areas where poverty and stigmatisation define people's lives, I find that the classical psychological categories of "normality" and "abnormality" are not very useful for analysing and monitoring changes in well-being. Indeed, it becomes clear that psychology does not represent subjects other than those within its narrow focus, even if these, sometimes, are as unreal as a statistical mass. However, even considering myself part of the critical movement of psychology, sharing its arguments and agreeing that a change of direction is required, in my own research practice concerns have arisen that resonate with those expressed by Held. Other critical psychologists, too, have defended the non-abandonment of the notion of objectivity in science (Ratner, 2019).

Unquestionably, knowledge of the socio-cultural, economic and historical realities of the individuals with whom we work is absolutely necessary in order to understand their subjective world and to facilitate its transformation. However, as Held suggests, attempting to create a "psychology" for each cultural group could have counterproductive collateral effects for the very subjects it is intended to represent. Without entering into the dilemma of how a cultural group can be defined in a "stable" way (given that groups and the identifications of what we call their situational

members are in constant flux), or deciding who is legitimised to make such a definition (in itself, a knotty problem), and assuming that the characterisation made is respectful, rigorous and comprehensive, the problem of "how to use" this definition also raises ethical and pragmatic questions.

As a real-world illustration of the above issues, I will describe an area in which I participated directly as a researcher and activist: the management of cultural diversity in educational contexts (Gibson, 1984). As a global trend, but especially in Spain, various studies have found "benevolent assimilationism" to be the model predominantly employed in our schools to manage cultural differences among schoolchildren (Gibson & Carrasco, 2009). As a product of the "deficit model", this approach denies the cultural and individual diversity that actually exists in schools and society, validating only the knowledge that is related to the dominant cultural groups. We might see an analogy between the perspective adopted from this model and that of traditional psychology, which views as "defective" any human way of life that differs from what is "normal". In contrast, when a committed attempt is made to acknowledge and make space for the understanding, modes of interaction and indigenous cultures of minority-origin students, they do achieve recognition. As a result, there is greater well-being for all schoolchildren; feeling themselves recognised and valued, they are willing and able to undertake academic tasks from the security of their own cultural self-esteem. At the international level, such experiences have been reported, in which elements and modes of interaction of the students' communities of origin are incorporated into educational practice (Wills et al., 2004). According to Held (2019), this would be analogous to the indigenous psychology (part of Critical Psychology) alternative to the standpoints of traditional psychology. However, in practice, the educational model described has generated certain negative effects among the diverse student body, such as minimising their own expectations and even producing segregation and victimisation, from the moment they are classified and given "special" treatment, which has the contrary impact of stigmatising the intended beneficiaries (García Castaño & Olmos, 2012; Sánchez-Medina et al., 2014). An example of this is the "culturalist vision" of immigration (Franzé Mundanó, 2008), which fosters a perception of immigrant students in which cultural differences are articulated according to ethnic origins, making this aspect visible in students who are then identified as the main protagonists of the educational difficulties experienced. The situation, thus, is complicated, with two perspectives (benevolent assimilationism and interculturality) that appear to be equally problematic.

On the one hand, if planners try to implement a policy of majority culture learning, this might produce a standardisation of the diverse student body. However, as we have seen, this does not occur because, among other problems, the lack of recognition of identities of origin makes it difficult for minority communities to learn and integrate. If, on the contrary, planners attempt to provide visibility and acknowledgment of the knowledge, modes of interaction and cultures of origin of minority group students, these may be recognised but at the risk of the students experiencing segregation within the population addressed (Sánchez-Medina et al., 2014).

This analogy with the management of cultural diversity in schools spotlights the problems that may be encountered in the well-intentioned application of an indigenous (and critical) psychology. Convinced by the principles of Critical Psychology, as described in the four points of the previous section, and as an activist in this field, I nevertheless feel that the practical application of its assumptions to develop a general theoretical psychology could result in dysfunctions similar to those faced by educators when they seek to achieve the educational inclusion of schoolchildren whose cultural origin is not that of the Western male middle-class model. If objective science does not offer solutions based on the real experiences of those involved, neither does the generalisation of the psychological knowledge of diverse cultural groups. As is well known from anthropology, the tendency to favour ethnocentric observations is not exclusive to Western culture (LeVine & Campbell, 1973), but evidently the disproportionate power wielded by the latter has led to the damage done being exponentially greater.

Moving on From Praxis: Observing the Reality of Psychological Interventions

From different outlooks on psychological theorising and, above all, from practical experience in a wide range of communities, the need for a critical review of the foundations of psychological science is starkly apparent. However, the epistemological direction and the methodological tools that should be employed in such a revolution are much less clear. Should we advocate a psychological science that incorporates the folk wisdom inherent to the "popular psychologies" of different cultural groups? Should a cultural relativism be applied to psychology, whereby conclusions may only be applied when they fit the context in question, thus abandoning the

quest to find universal patterns of behaviour? If so, what are the defining categories of these cultural subjects: their ethnicity, nationality, sex, gender or social class? Which research methods would serve to respect and reflect the subject, without at the same time reifying or essentialising it? A project to dismantle psychology should necessarily be undertaken, but it will not be straightforward or free of controversy, as is apparent in the heated debates currently taking place in this regard (Jovanović, 2010; Ratner et al., 2020).

I have neither the intention to seek nor the ability to obtain a precise answer to these questions. Instead, I wish to transmit what I have learned from participation in culturally diverse real-world settings about conditions that favour social transformation. The practical, sometimes intuitive, solutions that have been drawn from social and educational action in response to situations of cultural contrast show the way forward for psychology as a science, which is taking its first steps in this direction. The common factor in the experiences that I will describe is what in a recent article I termed the "hybrid psychological agent" (Macías-Gómez-Estern, 2020), that is, the transformative potential that subjects or concrete hybrid systems acquire from praxis, from the everyday experience of applying science and psychology, from taking decisions and from putting them into practice, and not from pure theorisation.

The first two case studies I discuss were observed in the framework of a project jointly carried out by the Pablo de Olavide University (Seville, Spain) and various schools in Polígono Sur[1], a marginal neighbourhood in the same city. This project was called *La Clase Mágica—Sevilla* (the Magic Class: Seville) (Macías-Gómez-Estern et al., 2014; Macías-Gómez-Estern & Vásquez, 2014). This "town-and-gown" collaboration is based on the Fifth Dimension model developed by Michael Cole (1998) and the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition at the University of California (Cole & Distributive Literacy Consortium, 2006; Nilsson & Nocon, 2005), as modified by *La Clase Mágica* (Vásquez, 2003). It involves projects combining university teaching and research and community intervention, in which university students complement their academic

[1] For socio-economic and demographical information about Polígono Sur, see 'Diagnóstico de Zonas con Necesidades de Transformación Social' (Ayuntamiento de Sevilla, https://www.sevilla.org/servicios/servicios-sociales/publicaciones/diagnosticozonas-necesidades-transformacion-social.pdf) and 'Monografía comunitaria Polígono Sur: aprendemos a con-vivir mejor' (Fundación Atenea, http://convivirpoligonosur.fundacionatenea.org/2017/02/13/monografia-comunitaria-poligono-suraprendemos-a-con-vivir-mejor/).

work with active participation in educational projects in the community. Under a Service Learning (SL) scheme (McMillan, 2011) at *La Clase Mágica-Sevilla*, students practice and incorporate academic knowledge and social commitment values in a mutual feedback process between action and reflection (Macías-Gómez-Estern et al., 2019). The third case considered is that of a community transformation process led by an NGO in the Seville suburb town of San Juan de Aznalfarache.

Case 1 The School as a Catalyst for Community Transformation—Hybridisation of the School Setting

The first case took place in *CEIP Andalucía* (the Andalusia Centre for Infant and Primary Education), where we collaborated in the SL project described above. This school, where 90% of the children are Roma, previously experienced high levels of absenteeism, school failure and violent confrontations, both within the classrooms and in the neighbourhood. In 2006, following an agreement between teachers, educational institutions and the families, the school decided to join the Andalusian government's "Learning Communities" programme, following the model proposed by Carmen Elboj et al. (2000). Under this participatory model of school management, the different agents involved in this community share decisions and responsibilities in school affairs. The model also recommends collaborative relationships with institutional and/or associative agents, in the local neighbourhood and further afield, including, in the case of this school, the Pablo de Olavide University. Among these collaboration projects is the SL project, in which the university has participated since 2012.

The first aspect we address concerns, not so much the subjects of our intervention (the university students and their SL activity), but the observations made during these eight years of collaboration accumulated within a single educational space (*CEIP Andalucía*) as a facilitator of transitions between the academic logic, on the one hand, and the community spirit of the Roma population, on the other. In a previous text (Lalueza et al., 2019), we examined how this school was managed and how the different agents within the educational community constructed hybrid scenarios (combining values, discursive genres—Mikhail M. Bakhtin, 2010—and actions, both in the formal school environment and in the practices of the Roma community, who are the majority in this school population) to

promote a comprehensive transformation.[2] This system not only favoured the integration of the Roma children (elsewhere, a stigmatised minority) in the school but also fostered respect, knowledge and acceptance among the teaching staff and the institution itself (representatives of the majority culture) of the customs and values of this community.

Without seeking to generalise or to take an essentialist view of any cultural group, the practices observed and our own experience suggest that two ways of life coexist in *CEIP Andalucía*, those of the formal school and those of the Roma community. These two "activity systems" (Engeström, 2007) present clear differences in their goals, subjects, mediating tools, rules and division of labour. Table 2.1 summarises this contrast, which is discussed in detail in Lalueza et al. (2019).

In this case, what is significant for our purposes is the way in which the *CEIP Andalucía* school community jointly creates bridges connecting these two scenarios, via dialogue and the daily hybridisation of the respective tools employed. A paradigmatic example of this approach is described in Lalueza et al. (2019, pp. 167–168):

> The following example illustrates how the school works: an eight-year-old boy, accompanied by his mother, was refusing to enter school and crying. Together, the teacher and the child's mother persuaded him to enter his classroom. Later, the mother told the school's head teacher a possible reason for the child's behaviour: he had stayed up very late the night before because he was present at a "pedida" (a festive ceremony that is very important in Roma culture, in which the family of a husband-to-be visits the family of the bride-to-be to request their consent for the marriage). On hearing this, the teacher was sympathetic and understanding, expressing acceptance of this cultural practice, although the timing of the occasion was hardly compatible with the child's need to attend school in the morning, and encouraged the mother to accompany her son to the classroom. A more punitive, rigid attitude by the teacher would probably have resulted in the boy's absenteeism, consented to by the family. However, by expressing understanding and respect for a typical cultural practice of the Roma community, an immediate positive result was obtained: the family collaborated in ensuring the child attended school, as usual.

[2] The cases described in this article form part of a broader set of coordinated practices and empirical analyses conducted in parallel projects by the Autonomous University of Barcelona and the Pablo de Olavide University of Seville. For reasons of space, we focus exclusively on the Seville context. For more information on all these projects, see the relevant bibliography (Lalueza et al., 2019; Lalueza & Macías-Gómez-Estern, 2020).

Table 2.1 Comparison of the activity scenarios of the formal school and of the Roma community

School institution	*Roma community*
Individual as subject	Subject is always considered within the context of **family membership**
Educational goal is the internalisation and the autonomous application of acquired contents, skills and capabilities **Decontextualisation**	**Educational goal** is preparing young people to contribute to **maintaining the established social order**
Tools: Pedagogical instruments specifically aimed to transmit knowledge	**Tools**: Traditional guided learning, coinciding with productive community activity and transmitted through participation (first as spectators, secondly as assistants and apprentices and finally as major agents)
School community is composed of individuals organised exclusively according to their role in that context (students, teachers or service personnel)	**Community** comprises a network of families, and each person's role is maintained in all his/her social actions
School **rules** are a means of shaping individual responsibility through rewards, punishments, evaluations, merits and demerits. Individual evaluations and credentials	**Roma law** governs relations within the ethnic community, emphasising collective values
Division of labour, organised according to roles and merits (teachers-students)	The "teachers" are simply those who perform the tasks pertaining to teaching and who have a prior relationship (family or community) with the learner. **Knowledge is intimately linked to experience** and hence to sex and age

But the scene witnessed did not end there, in what might otherwise have been an irreflexive adoption by the school of cultural practices that, in certain aspects, might not facilitate the children's adherence to the norms (and their justifications) in the school environment. What in fact took place was a real process of negotiation and dialogue between contrasting motivations. In subsequent meetings with the families, the teacher encouraged discussion about the possible disruption caused by children's attendance at festive events in the middle of the school week and the harm caused by the consequent loss of rest and sleep. This attitude to the question shows how the school institution respects and legitimises the understandings and practices

of the Roma community, but also uses them to foster acceptance of its own goals and values.

This example is one of many that might be cited from daily life at this school. By permitting a degree of permeability, within the formal context of the school, of the ways of life, beliefs and language of the Roma community (who in general are not represented in any institutional setting and are often subjected to social stigma), this community is legitimised, which favours its acceptance and acquisition of new goals. Thus, Roma children (and hence their families) appropriate the school logic, but not to any lesser extent than the teachers' corresponding appropriation of Roma community logic. Everyday life at the school features mixed modes of operation, which facilitate communication, transitions between different areas of knowledge and mutual respect, ultimately producing a positive transformation.

Case 2 Otherness and "Frontier Crossing" by University Students

The second case I will describe has the same setting as the first, but concerns the experience of the university students who took part in the SL project, supporting educational activities at *CEIP Andalucía* with Roma children. As explained above, under the "Learning Community" format adopted by this school, it collaborates with various organisations, including the university. The students assist in teaching-learning tasks in the classrooms, working on projects and/or in small groups; each student normally supervises and works with 3–4 children in these sessions.

The students in this programme were in the first year of their degree studies in Social Education at the Pablo de Olavide University. For some, the experience represented a "frontier crossing" in their identity development, producing a qualitative leap in perspective and self-positioning, which embraced not only the acquisition of academic knowledge but also the implementation of practical capacities related to their profession. Even more importantly, this experience led them to take on more complex roles and identities within their own social reality. This transition ensued as an internal counterpart of the interactive processes arising from the sociomaterial composition of the SL scenario, in which two different activities converged, each with its own goals, subjects, mediating tools, rules and division of labour. Figure 2.1 (from Lalueza & Macías-Gómez-Estern, 2020) illustrates this multifaceted setting. At this intersection, new

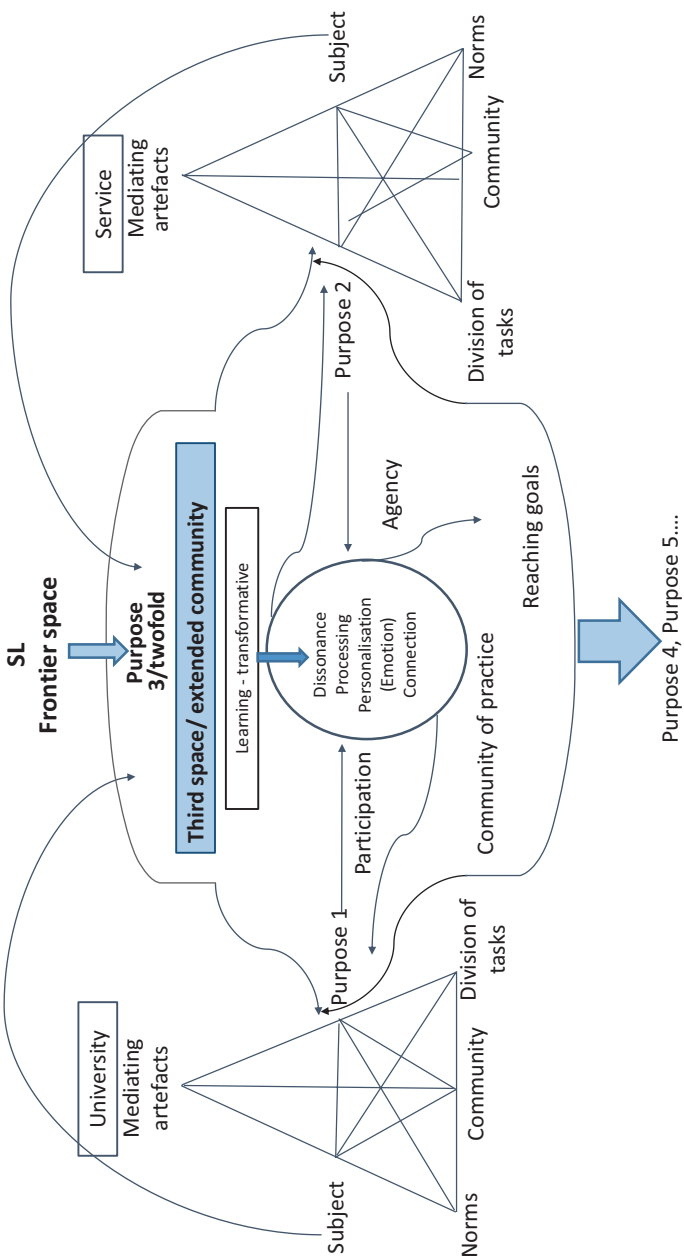

Fig. 2.1 The learning process and identity change at the frontier space of SL

meanings, rules and forms of agency are generated every day from the heterogeneities of those participating (Roma children, schoolteachers, students, researchers and university teachers), giving rise to "frontier crossings" and new outlooks on otherness.

Among the impacts of otherness, the students undergo a series of emotional experiences, including dissonance, processing, personalisation and connection (Naudé, 2015). However, the dynamics provoked by the experience of "otherness" are not enough. There must also be mediation in the process of cognitive elaboration. Above all, agency must arise from involvement, within a heterogeneous scenario that is transformed by the participation of different agents, each generating their own goals.

In this case, too, the hybrid characteristics of the scenario and its participants motivate them to learn, generating new goals and maintaining the system in a state of constant flux. An essential element in this transformation is the affective and personal connection between the participants, from their respective, diverse subjectivities. Other researchers have documented similar processes in educational contexts, referring to the creation of a "third space" (Gutiérrez, 2008), as a setting in which the teacher's and the students' scripts intermingle, creating the potential for real communication (Di Giacomo & Gutiérrez, 2017). In this third space, the participants' varying motives, stemming from different ages, cultures, assumed roles and life experiences, are legitimised, giving rise to negotiation processes that help create and achieve shared learning objectives.

Case 3 The People of San Juan—Celebrating the Diversity Present in Every Gaze

The context of our third illustration is the town of San Juan de Aznalfarache, also in the province of Seville. San Juan is a dormitory town, located just 4 km from the provincial capital. It is geographically small, with an area of 407 hectares wedged between neighbouring municipalities, and is crossed by major routes of communication towards other suburbs and towns, making communication difficult between its own neighbourhoods. In the early twentieth century, the town had a population of barely a thousand, but in 2017 there were 21,418 registered inhabitants, of whom 10% were of foreign origin. In 2018, almost 30% of the active population were unemployed, and this problem was especially acute among the immigrant community, a traditional source of unskilled labour, who were hardest hit by the economic crisis and the subsequent recession. The town features three types of housing: exclusive residential estates occupied by residents

with medium-high incomes; stigmatised residential housing, with population groups defined as "marginalised"; and vulnerable residential spaces with populations at risk of exclusion for various reasons, such as urban degradation, aging, immigration and cultural shock, and the economic crisis.

This urban context is conducive to social segregation and to conflicts among cultural groups. In response, the NGO "Assembly of Cooperation for Peace" (https://www.acpp.com/), which has its regional headquarters in San Juan, has for several years promoted community, educational and neighbourhood projects to provide the population and its social agents with tools to generate a positive collective identity based on the values of diversity and solidarity. One such project is that of *Gente de San Juan* (the People of San Juan) (http://gentedesanjuan.org/).

In an ethnographic study carried out as part of this project, the neighbours were asked about their views on the coexistence between the different ethnic groups of San Juan. Most of those interviewed commented that the presence of foreign cultures was fully accepted and normalised in everyday contexts, although contrary opinions were also expressed; thus, some respondents believe that "the others" were responsible for cultural conflict, due to their incapacity to "integrate" into the host society, understanding by "integration" assimilation and the abandonment of certain cultural patterns of origin. In most cases, conflict arose from the ways in which physical spaces were occupied, with longer-established residents feeling that "the others" had gradually taken over "their" spaces: the square, the street, the corner. The indigenous population (who in their time had also been migrants, arriving from rural areas of Andalusia in the 1960s and 1970s) tended to be older, with children living elsewhere and wishing to have a quiet life in public spaces. The population of foreign origin, on the other hand, were usually younger, had small children and made more intensive use of these spaces, with games, get-togethers, conversations, arguments, raised voices and so on. The outcomes of these activities, such as littering or circumstantial disturbance, clashed with the peaceful way of life that the older generations wished to enjoy.

The main activity of the *Gente de San Juan* project was to compile a set of photographic portraits of local residents and to present them in various formats, including an exhibition in the local theatre, the publication of a book entitled "Gente de San Juan" (Asamblea de Cooperación por la Paz, 2019), a website and large-scale street posters. In all of these formats,

Picture 2.1 Some of the street posters hang in the "Gente de San Juan" project

except the posters, the photos were accompanied by micro-biographies of those portrayed. The aim of this activity was to support the construction of a cooperative social fabric celebrating the diversity existing within the town, making this very diversity a hallmark, a reason for pride and an asset on which to base development. Moreover, it was hoped that this initiative would counteract emerging (albeit incipient and narrowly based) outbreaks of racism and xenophobia (Picture 2.1).

The publication of this book and the photo exhibition were just the start of a process of face-to-face interaction that transcended social and ethnic categories (Turner, 1991), offsetting culture shock and the danger of discrimination. The inauguration of the exhibition, the neighbours' surprise at seeing these larger-than-life portraits on the walls of buildings and the thought that their photos might be included in future editions … these developments all started people talking and telling each other stories about the men and women portrayed. Their personal histories reflected not only the diversity within the community but also how mobility and migration had been part of the lives of many families, at different times, uniting them in the travails of seeking a better life and of shouldering aside any stigmatising constructions of "cultural otherness".

This case vividly demonstrates that the face-to-face interaction of people who may have been socialised in different activity systems, through

their own personalisation and humanisation, from their own life stories and in managing their everyday affairs, in this case mediated by an artistic tool (photography) and its ability to convey both the emotional gaze and the physical representation, has the potential to transform its participants and their circumstances (in this case, the town of San Juan).

The above-described social and educational interventions might inspire an outcome providing a way forward, towards a form of psychology that I suggest would overcome the deficiencies observed by critics. The cases observed, featuring face-to-face interactive encounters among subjects or activities originating from diverse cultural contexts (Roma community and the formal school environment, in Case 1; university/professional practice plus majority community culture and the Roma community, in Case 2; variegated geographical, cultural and ethnic origins, in Case 3), produce a hybrid scenario in which the protagonists' motives, rules of play, objectives and so on do not fully belong to one or the other context, thus generating processes of connection, dialogue and transformation among the systems and subjects involved. The processes generated in these contexts are not one-way, as is often the case in classical social (and psychological) interventions, whereby a given social subject group considered to be experiencing deprivation (social, educational or psychological) needs to "learn" a new world of meanings. Rather, they imply a change taking place in various directions, in which the "intervening" subjects (teachers, researchers, social agents, psychologists, university students, etc.) are also implicated.

By Way of Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shared ideas and reflections drawn from my experience as a participant psychology researcher in projects grounded in real-world socio-educational contexts, seeking to shed light on some of the dilemmas facing contemporary psychology. For many years now, the challenges that need to be addressed in psychology have been debated within the framework of "Critical Psychology", a trend of thought that is shaking the pillars of psychology as a scientific discipline, exposing its dysfunctions and inability to reflect the full spectrum of the human experience or to enhance well-being. With no pretension to exhaustiveness, in the first part of this chapter, I sketch a description of the diverse voices calling for a new approach to psychology. These voices proclaim the inseparable nature of mind and culture-society, the necessary commitment of psychology to the

emancipatory movements of people and communities, the need to recover the subject and praxis for psychological science and the value of research methodologies that reflect human complexity and overcome object-subject duality. This objective and the paths leading towards it seem apparent, but obtaining the necessary equipment to perform such a journey is less straightforward.

As a result of this difficulty, debates continue in scientific forums, such as the questions arising from the article by Held (2019) on the epistemic violence exercised within psychology as a science on "indigenous" persons and communities and on the origin of this violence (Does it emerge from scientific methodology? From the researcher's perspective? From the intentions of social agents when they interpret research findings for their own purposes?). Held's paper was the target article of an open peer commenting issue of the journal "Theory & Psychology", which is dedicated to epistemological debates and new currents in this discipline. This issue discussed the dilemmas encountered in the quest to derive abstract, universal guidelines for devising a new course for the discipline, in a way that includes, respects and represents the "cultural others" hitherto ignored by this science.

My own contribution to this issue of the journal was based on the premises and experience that are developed at greater length in the present article. Through the presentation of two mini-biographies of professionals working in the area of research—participatory action in the social sciences, both of which are examples of convergence, within a single individual, from different contexts of socialisation (that of the Roma community and that of academic research), I discussed the figure of "hybrid psychological agent". With this concept, I turned from the level of ideas on how to apply psychology to that of the practices observed in situ, arguing that:

> Hybrid science means allowing procedures, practices, dialects, and wisdoms from "others" and "other worldviews" to permeate all phases of the (until recently) monocoloured science (Kontopodis & Jackowska, 2019) led by White, middle-class, Western men. This would involve, among other things, facilitating and encouraging the participation of people from diverse backgrounds in psychology science and practice, that is, having the other in ourselves (or ourselves in the other), sharing the same research activity and practice, setting joint goals and motives. In short, hybridity means building bridges between knowledge systems in specific interactions among subjects. (p. 432)

The cases presented in this chapter broaden the spectrum of systems to which I attribute the transformative condition of hybridisation, in the line of what has been described recently by Underwood, Mahmood & Vásquez (2021). Here, it is applied, not just to people but also to contexts and settings. I suggest that it is through the active participation of socialised elements in different "activity scenarios" (meaning cultures, generations, nationalities, gender, social class, etc.) in a single interactive space, where these elements generate shared motives and goals and all are able to exert agency, that a dynamic of dialogue is generated among the different "knowledge systems" involved, potentially resulting in transformation. In every case, an aspect of great importance is the possibility of emotional and empathic connection with "the other", provided by tangible interpersonal interaction, which naturally emerges when narratives and communicative languages that transcend rationality come into play, such as those expressed in the arts. Each of the cases presented in this chapter extends this idea, showing that diversity may be incorporated not only in the participating subject, as observed by Macías-Gómez-Estern (2020), but also in the activity scenario itself.

Psychology, as a discipline, should be conceptualised not just as an abstract, theoretical figure but as the body of behaviour and actions involved in each step taken and each decision made in the performance of research and of professional practice, executed by material subjects each of whom shapes the resulting impact on scientific knowledge. Like any other field of endeavour, psychology is composed of a set of activity systems, with their own rules, participants and motives. These systems provide scenarios for socialisation and learning and also for the contribution of the agents involved (Lave, 2011). Our proposal, along the lines of prior work in this area, such as Michalis Kontopodis and Marta Jackowska (2019) and Lotte Huniche and Estrid Sørensen (2019), emphasises the importance of these practices. In the words of Huniche and Sørensen:

> While ongoing reflections on importance, timeliness, moral, and practical implications of research are important in systematic research assembling, the practical engagement with the phenomenon, and all it takes to assemble it, are equally crucial. (p. 551)

By advocating and promoting the participation of "othered" subjects in each of the craft-making steps in our science, and by generating spaces in which these subjects can be directly involved in the same activity and in

working to attain its goals, the materials and the shape of the "scientific product" achieved will thus encompass diversity, but without necessarily rejecting the fundamental requirements of scientific processes and interventions. It is therefore highly important to situate the debate and the hope for change in contextualisation, in communicative practices and in acknowledging that they emerge from concrete situations and concern specific persons, thus surpassing the mere provision of broad guidelines, which cannot foresee each and every specificity of reality. In another area of study, but from the same perspective, I recall the words of the journalist Nesrine Malik (2019), who defended the need to be aware of "new stories" (about women, ethnic and sexual minorities, migrants from former colonies, persons who have been racialised, etc.) and to include them in the public debate. In this chapter, I argue the need to incorporate the knowledge and actions of these "new subjects" into scientific activity and into the psychological professions.

Only thus, with the active involvement of diverse subjects in each and every one of the elements of scientific and professional enterprise, will science generate knowledge that includes and echoes the hopes and fears of the equally diverse people addressed, and so avoid—here again, I paraphrase Do Santos (2003)—the "waste of experience".

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CHAPTER 3

The Social-Historical Approach and Contemporary Social Psychology

Roberto Corral Ruso and Mario Rodríguez-Mena García

Introduction

Contemporary social psychology is expressed in a variety of proposals. Some of them are very new; others are more focused on variations of old traditions. From the well-known image of a functionalist psychology, oriented to diagnosis and punctual intervention, elaborated from concepts such as "group," "leader," and "communication," it is devoting itself to understanding the complex phenomena of societies and human beings in society, with purposes of self-understanding, emancipation, and autonomy; therefore, mostly rejects the tradition based on a positivist epistemology, quantitative methodologies, and rationalist logics. They all coincide in endorsing a phenomenological epistemology, employing qualitative methodologies and emphasizing the relevance of the symbolic

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systems—especially words—with which humans construct the world (Pichón-Rivière, 1975; Baron & Byrne, 2005). Such diversity imposes the need to elaborate a second-order reflection, an open and comprehensive metatheory that allows interpreting and integrating the concepts elaborated from different traditions.

This movement of focus and strategy implies an integration centered on social and human transformation. A vision of the human being situated at the center of social phenomena, but defined by and from the systems of social relations in which he or she exists and constructed by the symbolic systems he or she uses. This chapter offers one of the possible lines of contribution to this development, which has its roots in a reflection from Social Psychology in Latin America, specifically in Cuba, from a communitarian vision and with an integrating execution of different concepts and visions.

The integration that we propose was born from research and intervention in real problems related to the formation of social actors in different contexts of action. Specifically, it began with the study and transformation of this type of problem in a company and has been extending for 20 years to other social context, generating the need for second-order reflections and the integration of different theories and practices.

Its results have been published in three books, printed in Cuba, and numerous articles and book chapters published in Argentina, Brazil, Spain, Mexico, Puerto Rico, United Kingdom, and the USA, which are referred to at the end of the chapter.

Social-Historical Approach

Our most direct reference is the social-historical approach, developed by L.S. Vygotski in the Soviet Union in the twentieth century, introduced in Cuba in the 1960s of that century and still fully valid today. Strictly speaking, this proposal transcends the narrow frameworks of a theory or a group of concepts applicable to specific situations to encompass a broader and more complete understanding of the human being. It is not limited to a constructivist or cognitivist vision of the human being and his development; it is not a collection of concepts of use restricted to the educational issues, as is frequently found in the most popular texts for teachers (Carretero, 1993; Coll, 1996; Moll, 1993; Pozo, 1989, 1996; Sacristán & Pérez, 1994). It is not only a psychological proposal; we have considered it an anthropological, dialectical, and complex proposal, open enough to

allow the re-evaluation and integration of more specific, contemporary, and even more historical concepts and theories.

The original ideas of this approach explore the formation of the human being in a double phylogenetic and ontogenetic perspective. It discovers that one of the keys to the originality of human beings consists in the fact that, unlike animals, their vital activity is transformative, not adaptive. Human beings transform the reality in which they live according to their needs and purposes. In this activity they resort to the elaboration of instruments to modify the real world and adapt it to their interests, quite different from animals that adapt to their environments. Such instruments actualize the actions, intentions, and individual characteristics of their builders. Thus, the instruments constitute registers and inheritances of the activity they objectify, which exist outside the individual subjects, in networks of circulation and appropriation. But human beings also construct instruments to transform themselves. What we call individual psychological processes are also instruments of transformation, but on oneself. They exist as personal domains but also as registers that circulate in social networks, in the form of symbolic systems. Such systems include languages, routines, models and customs among others. Each individual being literally constructs himself in the process of mastering these languages, which he accesses only through relationships with others from his origin.

The social-historical approach highlights the social nature of human beings, not only in their genesis but throughout their life journey. It is in social relations that human beings find the instruments that build and perfect them. Each person is a node in a complex network of interactions and joint activities with others or with the real world interpreted from others through symbolic systems, recorded in cultures, and incorporated as a legacy of the humankind. Each individual human being is himself and the others with whom he establishes a relationship of formation or even of cooperation, and these others are inscribed as personal relationships in the very systems he manages to master. In this sense, the sentence of Vygotski (1987) is very clear, when he expressed: "Man, alone with himself, continues to function in communion" (p. 162).

Every human being constitutes in a certain way a fusion of social relations, histories, cultures, tools, and symbolic systems, contained in an individual subjectivity, which is always referred to a collective subjectivity and which is objectively expressed in different ways: as a relationship with others, whether communication or collaboration; as the use of collectively elaborated cultural tools, to transform the world or to transform oneself;

and as symbolic images for self-regulation, which includes systems of regulation, evaluation, approval or disapproval of behaviors, ideas, and concepts. Several processes allow this construction of individual subjectivity, inserted in the natural development of the individual. Of these, the most relevant is learning.

Human Learning from a Social-Historical Viewpoint

We all learn. This is a well-defined truth. However, this concept in the case of human beings has historically been circumscribed to the subject of teaching and school contexts, formal or informal, intentionally designed for learning. We investigate and know that much more is learned than what is foreseen in these contexts: tools to discover and master one's own body, its needs and urgencies; the relationship with objects through culturally constructed actions, including the mastery of tools and symbolic systems; and the relationship with others, from the most elementary communication to the mastery of the most personal expressions and cultural tools, which are recognized and incorporated from the direct link with other people. Thus, the subject of learning has been extended to different contexts, not related to the scholar world. In the case that concerns us, and that started this reflection, it was extended to the subject of Psychology in Organizations: organizational learning.

The question that motivated us initially concerned whether people working together in an organization could learn to perform their work efficiently. It sounds like a rhetorical question, but it has an important significance. Modern corporations spend large amounts of resources and a lot of time to train their employees; but this investment is not always effective if people do not master individual and collective resources for learning. Of course, there are many instructional programs that assume this training, from computer programs to specific training courses, but it was not clear how much of this information was really incorporated into individual subjectivity and remained not simply as a more or less efficient mastery of a productive activity but as a "personal way of being and acting" in the company. That presupposes issues such as identity, language, communication, personal meaning, and others.

But in a more theoretical direction, it meant rearticulating the issue of learning in a more encompassing dimension, because what was at stake was to understand, and eventually promote, the learning of ways of being in the work context itself, together with the learning of productive skills.

It was not efficiency in terms of results: it was the question of how a person effectively joins the group of other people who are part of a community that performs a specific activity but at the same time learns to be part of this community. We soon discovered that there was a real deficit of resources to take on these changes and it was necessary to seek theories, concepts, methodologies, and forms of evaluation that would allow us to address this issue. Strictly speaking, this meant understanding learning as a highly complex action and result, involving an object to be learned, a personal experience, a network of participants learning and collaborating, and finally a result that was not exhausted in the object learned but transcended towards the regulation of personal and collective ways of learning, in the process of becoming an individual and group being: a "person who learns."

Thus, we assume the category of learning from an interdisciplinary vision, as a process of participation in communities of practice that produces changes both in the meanings that are co-constructed and in the becoming of individuals and groups that interact in the social-historical context of a specific practice.

Learning in community implies permanent reflection on the practices that are carried out, as well as genuine participation in their transformation. As a result of this participation, new personal and group identities are constructed. This type of learning broadens the horizon of the community in which people participate, as it involves them in an active, relational, and co-evolutionary process. Learning takes place to the extent that there is dialogue and cooperation with others and its result on social inclusion.

Thus, learning is the mediator par excellence in the path that follows the genetic law of development, proposed by Vygotski (1987). This law explains that every psychological process (intrapersonal domain) is engendered from outside, in the relationship with others (shared domain), and in a process of appropriation which is transformed into an individual quality. Although learning leads to the development of individuals and communities, it can only occur if the subjects of learning (individuals and communities) possess the necessary tools to employ it in this important development-enhancing function (Rodríguez-Mena et al., 2004). These tools are also learned and acquired in the relationship with others.

Communities of Practice and Learning Communities as Tools for Social Innovation

In the search for concepts to understand the network of participants during learning processes, we considered that the concept "group" was not enough, because in addition to the psychological dimension, it was necessary to take into account the practice itself, which constituted the object to be learned. In fact, three dimensions were crossed: psychological, sociological, and pedagogical in a way different from traditional crossings. It was not one or the others: they were to be considered articulated. Concepts such as the "learning organization" (Argyris & Shön, 1978; Cyert & March, 1963; March & Simon, 1961; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Senge, 1992) existed in Organizational Psychology, but more than a label, a more operational concept was needed, one that would allow us to describe and monitor the vicissitudes of learning.

It was therefore necessary to identify and define a mediating category that would allow us to visualize simultaneously the changes in the individual subjects and the changes in the organization, the relationships that occurred between these two changes, and the degree of awareness that the subjects attained of these relationships. A concept, in turn, that would characterize the field of relationship and action and that would show the confluence of the individual subjects and the organization. The concept that seemed to us most appropriate to achieve this purpose was the community of practice (Wenger, 2001).

The notion of "situated learning" (Lave & Wenger, 1991), an antecedent of this approach, indicates precisely the contextualized nature of learning and refers to the participation of the learner in a community of practice, that is, in a social-cultural context of relationships, where he/she gains access to the knowledge necessary to transform this practice and to transform him/herself. A central idea in this conception is that learning takes place in any community of practice: this is the "natural"—meaning social—form of human learning.

This approach integrates practice, community, meaning and identity as interconnected elements that define each other and are necessary to understand social participation as a process of learning and knowledge:

- Community, as a way of understanding social configurations where goal attainment is defined as valuable and participation is recognized as competence.

- Practice, as a historical and social resource, a framework of shared references and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action; learning is the engine of practice and practice is the story of that learning.
- Meaning, as the changing capacity-individually and collectively-to experience life and the world as meaningful; it is always historical and dynamic, contextual and unique.
- Identity, as the change produced by learning who we are and the creation of personal stories of becoming in the contexts of our communities. (Rodríguez-Mena, 2013, p. 43)

A community of practice implies a group of people, collaborating in a common enterprise, with defined goals expressed in a concrete practice in which everyone participates in different ways, which generates senses of identity and belonging. In such communities, which are the real form of existence and relationship of human beings, from the most primary family to the most complex social and productive enterprises, there is a continuous circulation and recycling of tools, practices and routines, identity marks, discourses and symbolic systems, and, of course, cognitions and feelings. Human beings are involved in several communities of practice at the same time, from which they continually enter and exit in an endless spiral of subjectivities assumed and performed together with the practices in which they participate. These are roles acted out in scenarios, but which are effectively incorporated into one's own individual subjectivity. And one always learns, even if this is not the conscious goal of the community nor the intention of its participants.

The very perspective of the social-historical approach is fulfilled here in a concrete way by considering a form of alliance of human beings who come together to exercise a practice, but who at the same time force themselves to learn multiple objects and activities. The community of practice offers such a possibility and, much more, demands it as a legitimization of genuine membership and participation. It also highlights the issue of communities as open networks, allowing a free transit of people, knowledge, and tools between them, but with modifications in the positions, roles, and marks of meaning attributed to them. Everything depends of course on the degree of hierarchy that each individual attach to one or another

community; in everyday life people learn to classify the communities in which they participate according to the importance they attribute to them, the needs they satisfy, or the position of power they occupy. Of course, if the central objective is to learn, people may prefer individual to collective solutions, continuing a tradition of individualized learning. However, this approach can be extended further.

The initial question posed in our research was whether it was possible, without altering the original community itself in its constitution and practice, to transform it into a learning community. The answer to this question requires that the participants themselves discover and assume—as an act of self-consciousness—the possibility of learning as one of their goals in the community of practice to which they belong. But this is not limited to an "understanding" of this possibility; it also demands that they identify in their own individual repertoires the resources for learning and, in the case that they do not have them, that they recognize them in the other participants and the possibility of learning them from their collaboration. Including others as sources and even as methods for learning changes the perspective: resources circulate freely among participants, their monitoring becomes collective, and evaluation becomes formative and group-based while recognizing individualities. In more pragmatic terms, everyone has something to learn, but everyone also has something to teach. Something that Freire points out very eloquently: "no one educates anyone, just as no one educates himself; men educate themselves in communion, and the world is the mediator" (Freire, 1970, p. 70).

Thus, the community of practice constitutes one of the models for understanding, explaining, and investigating the real way in which people learn. It is defined as a "network of interdependent and self-organized activities and actions that link people, meanings, and the material world, in a complex system of internal exchanges and with the environment" (Rodríguez-Mena & Corral, 2006, p. 20).

The focus of this definition shifts from the personal characteristics of the members or the more or less fortuitous union of individuals to the very network of their relationships and allows the simultaneous visualization of the modifications both in the individual subjects and in the collective subject defined by a specific activity. Such a definition also allows the integration of the approaches of Social Psychology, in its elaborations on the characteristics of groups and teams; of Personality Psychology, when conceiving that personal transformations take place and are constantly redefined in contexts of relationship with others; and of Sociology, in the

ideas on communication and the constitution of collective subjects as agents of change.

The community of practice is the natural context for human learning, but this does not mean that every community of practice is a learning community. The latter category stems from an understanding of the social nature of human learning, which is "situated" in socially and culturally constructed communities of practice. That is, learning communities develop from established communities of practice that have become aware of their learning processes. They are communities of practice that reflect on their learning processes and work intentionally to guide these processes for the benefit of the individuals, the community, and the practice they are engaged in. Thus, we have defined a learning community as:

> A community of practice that becomes aware of its learning processes and acts upon them. Its members, fully identify with the community and its goals, have multiple and productive interactions. Learning becomes for them a permanent goal of development: they learn from practice and with the purpose of improving it. (Rodríguez-Mena et al., 2015, p. 61)

Communities of practice are here conceived as shared stories of learning. Learning does not refer to the mastery of content in a static way but to the very process of participating in an ongoing practice and engaging in its development. Learning is the process that changes our capacity to participate in practice, allows us to clarify our purposes, and defines the resources we have at our disposal or need to build to achieve our goals.

The process of gradual transition from the community of practice to the learning community is not spontaneous but intentional and requires the conscious use of methodological tools and procedures to achieve it. Based on these conceptual assumptions and on the results of several researches conducted on group learning processes (Rodríguez-Mena, 2013; Rodríguez-Mena et al., 2004; Rodríguez-Mena et al., 2015), we have developed a methodology for the conformation and development of learning communities.

To facilitate the process of learning community development, it is necessary to act on its three main dimensions: the Participation that is generated, the Practice itself that is developed, and the Identity that is built.

The three dimensions are closely related; each of them intertwines with the others. For this reason, a systemic and integrative approach is used in the dialectical analysis of the concrete behavior of each dimension. These

dimensions are objectified in the form of observable indicators for both participants and researchers.

Participation is essential to understand learning, since learning turns out from the process of participating in a practice shared with others, with the purpose of mastering and perfecting it as a sign of identity and belonging to that community. In this regard, we have evaluated three indicators of participation: motivation for learning situations, social interaction, and functioning of power structures.

Practice refers to the system of actions and procedures generated by the learning situations, which allows linking the members together and, of course, defining the community itself. It is evaluated in the indicators: collective management of the learning practice and specific achievements of the learning situations (with emphasis on the formation of the core competencies for the self-regulation of learning and for the specific activity in which the members of the learning community are trained).

Identity and the sense of belonging to the community is considered as a feature of maturity of the communities in cultural contexts. It refers to the change produced by learning about who we are and the creation of personal and collective stories of becoming from the contexts of our communities. It comprises two indicators: satisfaction with the performance of the community and the production of keys and signs of identity defining the community.

The methodology allows the learning community in formation to become aware of the self-regulated nature of the learning process and to articulate actions for its permanent development, with the intention of effectively influencing both the transformation of the reality in which they operate and the transformation of its members.

Vygotski's ideas provide the basis for considering the formation of a learning community as a necessary device to stimulate people's action and thinking and bring them to a higher level of performance than they would show if they acted individually. From the social-historical approach, it is possible to understand what developmental goal the learning community could assume for its members, which is why they would work to improve it permanently, because in itself such a community is a useful means for the intellectual and affective growth and development of the learners.

The learning community, as a context for interaction and dialogue, is constituted with broad purposes for its members: to improve the quality of their fundamental activity, to incorporate strategies and learn competencies to self-regulate learning, to cooperate with others, to master and

modify the instruments of action on the environment, to modify themselves by mastering themselves, and to become continuous explorers of their learning processes, through self-discovery and research. We consider it as a tool for social innovation because of its permanent orientation towards the solution of social problems based on the systemic interaction among the participating actors, who become empowered (socially more competent) in the complex process of communication, coordination of actions, and cooperation that takes place during the co-construction of knowledge and identities and which are assumed as shared values.

Human Competencies as Emerging from the Relationship Between People, the Context, and the Activity They Carry Out

In this context, competencies are an organizing concept for training and learning in the various spaces of social practice. A dialectical, relational, and complex view of competencies allows us to understand them as an emergent that is born from an encounter and that is not absolutely prefixed either in a subject or in a role or job position: competencies are simultaneously requirements of an activity and personal qualities of people, which are realized and concretized in this activity or in its products (Corral, 2006).

Our emphasis on reconceptualizing competencies from the social-historical imprint (Rodríguez-Mena, 2013; Rodríguez-Mena et al., 2015, 2019; Rodríguez-Mena & Corral, 2015a) unveils the vital importance of social interaction as the context and content of competencies, of their formation and learning. In the same sense, the social theory of learning (Wenger, 2001) emphasizes the participatory process character of the formation of any competency: participation that will always be situated in a historically contextualized social practice. Thus, our proposed definition of competence is:

> An emergent and self-organized process of actualization of potentialities and mobilization-articulation of the necessary resources, oriented to respond to a contextual demand—of a social and historically constructed practice—that is expressed in a performance—individual and/or collective—self-regulated and socially valued for its suitability. (Rodríguez-Mena et al., 2019, p. 21)

The idea of an emergent and self-organized process of actualization of potentialities allows understanding that competence is always "born" from the encounter between the intentions of the person and the demands of the task to be performed. A person is competent when he/she becomes aware of the need to adapt previous learning to the demands of the activity.

Competencies are constantly being perfected in their continuous process of formation; they are in themselves learning. They move in the broad diapason that establishes the poles of the latent and the manifest, which is expressed in the dialectic pairs: potentiality-execution, possibility-reality, and virtuality-actuality (Rodríguez-Mena, 2013). This movement makes it difficult to prefix them and places us in the permanent need to make dynamic analyses of the interaction produced by the multiple variables that come into play during their formation and development: the person in activity (and learning), the context or learning situation, and the demands of solution and quality that the activity itself poses.

Thus, the person actualizes his or her virtual repertoire (Lévy, 1999); but not only to execute it or make real what appeared to be possible but also to create something new. In this sense, actualizing is an emergent process, an opportunity for the competent person to find new solutions to the situations or problems that arise and that he/she builds in his/her daily practice: "actrualizing implies something more than executing a potential or making real what appeared as possible; it is in essence a creation: the execution of acts not prefixed in any part, the invention of ways of doing and the insightful use of knowledge" (Rodríguez-Mena, 2013, p. 62); in short, the production of new qualities, from the dynamic configurations of tendencies, coercions, forces, and purposes that mobilize action (virtualization, according to Lévy, 1999), which once actualized acquire new meanings.

This requires the mobilization and articulation of the necessary resources. In the words of Le Boterf (1997), competencies are not themselves resources in the form of knowing how to act, know how to do, or have attitudes but rather they mobilize, integrate, and orchestrate such resources. This mobilization is only relevant in a situation, and each situation is unique, even if it can be considered as an analogy of others already faced: "the competent person is the one who knows how to build in time relevant competencies to manage increasingly complex professional situations" (Le Boterf, 1997, p. 43). When competencies are actualized and occur in the course of the activity, they are expressed in actions that make it possible to articulate the resources that people master to ensure better

performance in the activity they perform, as well as to orient, guide, and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions they execute.

The integration or articulation of these resources is of course a creative act. A competent person must identify where these resources are, whether personal or collective, already incorporated or in formation, in order to gather them and implement them as tools for action.

In all this emerging, integrating, and creative process, the capacity for orientation is essential; that is, the competent person knows how to orient him/herself in the situation in order to plan, guide, supervise, and self-regulate his/her actions from a personal involvement that is sustained in a deep process of reflection and permanent construction of meanings.

Suitability, on the other hand, refers to the subject's capacity to integrate different knowledge that allows him/her to achieve impact in what he/she does and to fulfill the established goals with quality. Competence as an object of evaluation implies an effective and efficient performance of a function, role, or position, expressed in the adequate mobilization and combined use of the necessary resources for such performance, whether personal or collective.

But all competence is recognized and affirmed by a third party; therefore, being competent at the level of a standard of excellence is not an individual phenomenon but a social one (Wittorski, 1997). It is in the social context where competencies are generated and expressed: every competency requires the recognition of some community of praxis that legitimizes it and participation in social networks through which knowledge circulates, as well as a constant evaluation of contexts as sources of resources (Corral, 2006).

Therefore, competencies have a virtual existence in these circulation networks, and if they manage to be actualized as a personal domain and continuously improved, it is due to the social nature of learning and to the intersubjective relational dynamics that allow people to communicate, cooperate, and manage cultural symbols, socially and historically constructed.

Since our initial work on the development of learning communities, we have focused on three major clusters of competencies whose articulation should lead to the self-regulation of learning (Rodríguez-Mena et al., 2004). By naming these groupings of competencies as "cores," we are highlighting their heuristic nature, still in the process of search and substantiation. Another reason for using the construct "core competencies" refers to the need to encompass individual variability in the mobilization

and actualization of resources for the execution of a specific activity. Two people can be equally competent in the same activity, although they show differences in the interpretation, execution, and evaluation of their own actions. In this way we maintain the heuristics of the concept, trying to capture the activity that identifies competence in its most generalized character, but without ignoring individual differences.

Experiences with various learning communities over several years of research have made it possible to elaborate this idea of nucleating around three key processes (meaningfulness, transfer, and management of learning situations), the competencies needed to self-regulate learning. The core competencies are oriented towards the updating of the learner's resources in learning situations that require a successful performance in the activity; therefore, they are always competencies with an intention (competencies for…). The three core competencies for the self-regulation of learning are summarized below:

1. Competencies for structuring learning experiences. They refer to the learner's ability to interpret learning experiences within certain schemes or structures of functioning. Here the psychological processes are employed with the intention of re-evaluating, deconstructing, and reconstructing those schemas with which we understand the reality around us and ourselves as part of that reality. The levels of comprehension in the learner depend directly on his or her possibilities to elaborate meanings. The construction of meanings is an active process that requires the total involvement of the learner. Some authors consider that true understanding of something is reached when the person is able to re-create it again (Lipman et al., 1992). Structuring is also restructuring and destructuring. They involve the realization of an active process of re-construction of social meanings and the discovery of the personal meaning and vital significance that these meanings have for the person-learner.
2. Competences for the contextualization of learning experiences. The processes that make it possible to extract from each learning experience those properties that can be generalizable, transferable, or extrapolated to other contexts more or less different from the one in which they originally arose, as well as the establishment of productive connections to take advantage of present and past learning experiences with a vision of the future, are grouped in this core of competencies. Contextualization summarizes the variety of actions involved in the learning process that

also imply decontextualization and recontextualization of learning experiences. Contextualization competences are those that make it possible for knowledge to stop being inert and become generative knowledge. Generative knowledge is that which can expand beyond the situation in which it was learned and requires the strategic use of thought, something like what the Gestalt school of psychology defined as "productive thinking" in the sense of really understanding problems from their new perceptual and conceptual organization. This theory tells us that when there is true understanding, generalization to other problems of a similar nature is facilitated.

3. Competences for the management of learning experiences. They involve knowing how to articulate both personal processes and resources and the instruments, symbols, people, and environmental resources involved in learning situations, all with the intention of planning, organizing, evaluating, and monitoring the progression of learning experiences. Self-management of learning includes important aspects related to metacognition, cognitive strategies and styles, self-control, use of alternatives, and help-seeking. The strategic role of the learner is supported by the "Basis Orientation of Action" (BOA). For Galperin (1965), the BOA is constituted by the necessary conditions (on which the learner will rely) for the fulfillment of the actions required in the solution of tasks. The BOA is the image, the project, the anticipated representation of the action, and the environment where it will take place (Rodríguez-Mena et al., 2017, pp. 72–73).

These cores of competencies are not exclusive; they combine with each other in a coherent manner, cross the different psycho-pedagogical dimensions present in all learning situations, and have dual functionality: indicative and predictive of the self-regulation of learning.

The three core competencies, although linked, can be evaluated independently; however, perhaps the highest point of self-regulation of learning is found precisely at the moment when reaching the full development of one of them requires that the others also evolve at the same level, thus creating the necessary conditions for such a qualitative leap to take place.

The cores of competencies for the self-regulation of learning allude to potentialities present in the learner-person, and such potentialities, following Vygotski's maxim, can only emerge in a relational context. It is there where they are formed and articulated, since they do not exist prior to the relationship and need the immersion of the learner in the learning

situation. The impossibility of achieving absolute perfection in human accomplishments also tells us that such competencies are no more than an ideal model of what efficient learning should be.

This is why all competencies imply personal involvement. It is not the mere action that is executed by orders from others or contextual imperatives of major force or by automatic responses but the meaning that the person attributes to his or her performance according to his or her motivations. It requires a personal image of the activity, in which appear not only the objective characteristics of the performance and its results but also the possibilities, scope, and goals of the person who performs. It also transcends the cognitive-affective dichotomy, as a unit that has meaning for the person who performs it and the people who observe it.

More than the action itself, competence is concretized in the activity that guides the action, the orders that the person gives him/herself to execute it. Simultaneously, it is a coupling of motives, expectations, and personal goals with the monitoring of the execution and self-evaluation of its results, which in Cognitive Psychology has come to be called "metacognition." It requires some degree of self-regulation of the individual himself, understood as a personal quality and his transformation—almost reduction or self-limitation—into the subject of an activity, defined by himself as necessary to achieve certain personal goals. In fact, the person becomes an actor in a role, and his or her activity is in reality a "performance."

Competence is not a mere resource owned by the person; it includes of course the process of identifying personal resources, such as experiences, knowledge, skills, preferences, and others; the way in which they can be used in the accomplishment of the activity; and the recognition of the lack of other resources, which can be identified in the immediate environment as necessary aids or supports or contents to be learned as personal domains prior to execution. The self-assessment of one's own potential to execute an activity and the excellence of the expected results are a mobilizing agent of complementary actions directly linked to the central activity but variable from person to person according to the resources he/she considers he/she already possesses as personal domains.

Competence is completed by a defining quality: the possibility of deriving individual resources and solutions to current problems from the strength and fruitfulness of relationships with other people. Thus, competencies involve an assessment of contexts as possible sources of resources, support in communities of practice, and participation in social networks of

knowledge circulation. Competencies exist continuously in these circulation networks as virtual contents that allow their individual mastery and continuous improvement while exposing the social character of learning. They require personal qualities that allow cooperation with other people, the mastery of communicative skills, and the handling of cultural symbols.

The Role of Dialogue in Joint Action

Communication is vital for any learning process. In our experiences of working with learning communities in diverse social contexts (establishments, schools, communities), we have discovered that all too often people do not use communication adequately, either because they lack skills, do not consider it necessary beyond talking, or simply because it seems obvious to them that they know it. Already in a learning situation aimed at improving interpersonal communication, people very soon discover the frequent errors and omissions in the tools of communication: How and how much do we listen to the other in a conversation? How many barriers and of what type do we include in our communication? How do we articulate the work of a team without good communication? The same thing happened when it came to deepen the learning about themselves and their relationship with others. In such circumstances, situations of misunderstanding are created due to the lack of efficient communication. In the learning process, it is necessary to know how to translate what is learned into gestures, signs, and words, since it constitutes an efficient mechanism for orientation, control, and evaluation of what has been learned (Galperin, 1965). Moreover, the most effective way to evaluate the relevance of a communication is in the interpretation that others make of the message transmitted.

By reflecting in learning communities on these and other issues related to interpersonal and small group communication, people come to understand that these actions are part of transversal competencies for all human activity and especially for good professional performance. In the case of community leaders, this understanding is crucial to be able to perform this role efficiently: they constantly have to communicate with many people and ensure understanding of what they say; in addition, they must face other situations, such as mediating and resolving conflicts of all kinds, where communication, and especially reflection on communication between the people involved, is a relevant dimension (Fried & Rodríguez-Mena, 2011).

Therefore, the issue of communication has a notable presence in the creation and development of learning communities and in the development of the competencies of their members. This competence is worked on from the most traditional references, with techniques for valuing and exercising communication skills and tools, to the use of productive dialogue for the elaboration of collective proposals, consensus decision-making, and the confrontation of dilemmas and conflicts.

The social-historical approach approaches communication in its anthropological sense as the symbolic systems that people handle in their interaction and that radically differentiate hominids from other animals. One of the phases of the act of knowledge is to translate into words the processes of subjectivity or in any symbolic system used in culture. Even more so when that knowledge leads to the interior of subjectivity, to talk about oneself, to tell one's purposes, to express one's emotions. "Running out of words" is frequent, but for a social leader, for example, it is a risky event.

The tradition of communication studies insists on the classic structure of the activity, placing the emphasis on the transmission of information. In fact, it focuses on the message, its legibility, the noise that can affect its transmission, its emission, and its reception, as is already known. But it does not sufficiently address the dimension of the change that takes place in the participants of a communication network beyond the reception and understanding of a message.

In general, linguistics deals with language as structure and history and semiotics as the structure of signifier, signified, and meaning. Psychology generally incorporates communication in the study of language as a psychological process or as a collective and, of course, social event. Communication sciences study the transmission and structure of communication in its most classical version and interpretation as the attribution of meanings and senses. Philosophy goes much deeper, considering language to understand its function in the genesis and expression of individual subjectivity and social systems. Briefly, theories of representation or pictorial and substitutive function of language with respect to the real world.

In this way it is generally considered that the symbolic system, specifically language, reflects, represents, and interprets reality; in short, labels it so that it can be understood and transmitted to others. Therefore, interpreter, sign, and message refer to an existing (objective and/or subjective) reality. They name an object that already exists in reality. With this conceptualization, where the role of language is only to point out already existing worlds for their transmission through communication with others, it is not

possible to understand how new worlds, new images, can be created. However, what happens in learning communities is a creative exchange, an act of production of new interpretations, new visions of reality, and new designs for inventing others. And this is also the way subjectivity itself operates, which suddenly, during the exchange with others, discovers and invents new ways of being and acting. In fact, this character of recreation is characteristic of competencies, which are always reinventing themselves in communication with others.

In this purpose, dialogue is instituted as the most powerful tool. Dialogue is not only a necessary means of communication and social coexistence but also an instrument of transformation. In a true dialogue there is no privileged or absolute knowledge; its function is to co-construct new meanings for the people who participate, henceforth its inclusive nature (Fried, 2008, 2015). In this way we assume a constructionist vision of the social world (Gergen, 1999, 2009); people in dialogue co-construct something new and different, which did not previously exist and which transforms, as intention and action, the reality external to individual subjectivity and subjective reality too (as individual and shared reflection).

The relationship between dialogue and thinking, as one of the essential processes in learning, is recognized in the literature and in psychological and pedagogical research. Vygotski (1982), in addressing the links between thought and language, expressed the idea that thought is the internalization of dialogue. People who engage in a reflective dialogue not only reproduce it within themselves once it has concluded but also personalize and rework it; they find alternatives to the ideas and opinions put forward or make them their own by recreating and rethinking them in their minds. In the same way, the mechanisms and processes of the dialogue itself, the communicative forms used, the skills deployed by the person and by others are internalized. This internalization makes possible, to a certain extent, a development of the person's metacognitive vision and allows the person to regulate his or her own processes for dialoguing and learning through dialogue.

Dialogue requires participation: one engages in dialogue if one participates, even if one does not speak or communicate (as listening, cooperation, coordination of actions and other expressions). Participation as dialogue is much more than "being there"; it involves personal involvement. In reality, we are always in relationship. One asks questions, has expectations, hopes, longings, fears, and so on in which there is always another person. We enter into dialogues from the moment we are born.

We know ourselves through how we are named and through the dialogues in which we participate (Fried, 2008).

But the idea of productive dialogue implies a different conceptualization; it abandons the representational vision and moves to a constructionist vision. Productive dialogues are "those that have the capacity to be effective in relation to the problem (understanding the context in which it takes place), to be inclusive of all participants, to recognize and recover resources, to promote knowledge and the necessary innovations, thus increasing social cohesion and effectiveness in the various areas and problems of application" (Fried & Rodríguez-Mena, 2011, p. 55).

Not all dialogue has the character of being productive. It is necessary to learn the competence to promote it, and above all it requires more research about the ways to form and apply it. In empirical applications, dialogue appeared as a more appropriate instrument for competence formation. It allowed to offer to learning the possibility of creation necessary for its effectiveness, in its results with respect to practice, and in its effects as a transformation of individual and collective subjectivities.

Productivity in dialogue is achieved when there is confluence in action; that is, joint action prevails, operating from the logic of possibility, with an inclusive recognition of the existence of the other and adequate management of differences based on the construction of shared values, realities, and trust. There is a passage from the I to the we (Fried, 2008).

Dialogue encompasses the entire universe of practice and participation present in each learning community. It allows the transit of knowledge, skills, evaluation criteria, and competency domains among participants; but most importantly, it made possible the awareness of oneself as a legitimate participant in the community. This requires assuming a generative perspective in dialogue as a gradual process of creating possibilities (relationships, visions, competencies, etc.) among individuals or groups through exchange, reflection, learning, and innovation.

The generative perspective (Fried, 2008) proposes a new approach to professional work, recognizes the past, considers the present, and moves towards the future. It proposes that through generative learning and dialogue, individuals, groups, and communities innovate, co-construct alternatives to address the problematic situations and challenges they face, and move towards transformative and productive solutions. This perspective makes use of creativity, innovation, learning, and sensitivity to emergent processes in dialogue to capture unique events in order to recognize, mobilize, and utilize people's resources, competencies, and knowledge

and support their efforts to re-imagine their lives, stage new versions of themselves and their relationships, learn to promote better dialogues, and reorganize their circumstances.

In our experiences working with community leaders seeking social transformations, this perspective of generative dialogue was essential for organizing competency-building processes. Dialoguing with others; encouraging creativity in the imagination of designs, solutions, and actions previously unthought of; resolving conflicts between people; and discovering in their process the similarities of interests and common purposes were actions well identified by these people. They not only dialogued in a generative way but also taught dialogue to the community in which they acted as a result of their training. We were able to assess these competencies during the follow-up of their community activity.

Participatory Methodologies as Devices for Social Transformation

However, none of these concepts could be operationalized without an effective methodology. The theoretical and methodological assumptions applied achieve their practical application in the design and implementation of different devices for social transformation, deployed as training programs and methodologies for social innovation. From the general theory selected, the methodology has to be dialectical, focused on the change itself rather than the result. A positivist reference methodology would only reach the result, and in this case we are specifically concerned with the changes and transformations that occur, both in the group and its practice and in individual subjectivities. We decided to use a participatory action research methodology, which allowed for such observations. In this methodology, the intentions, the paths to be followed, the results, and the forms of evaluation were decided by the participating subjects themselves, including the facilitators, who thus became the protagonists of the research process.

Specific variants of methodologies were derived: for the constitution of learning communities from communities of practice (Rodríguez-Mena, 2013; Rodríguez-Mena et al., 2004), as competency training programs for social transformation activities conducted by community leaders (Rodríguez-Mena et al., 2015), and for the formative evaluation of competencies (Rodríguez-Mena & Corral, 2018; Rodríguez-Mena et al.,

2019). All of them maintain the reference to the social-historical approach and learning as the main concept.

The application of these methodologies, programs, and devices for social transformation is based on the creation of different learning situations. Each learning situation is a provocation for change, which the participants themselves assume, modify, carry out, and evaluate as they go along. Work is based on appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider et al., 1995; Watkins & Mohr, 2001; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010), which highlights certain basic principles for adequate personal and group development: appreciating the positive, encouraging participation, recognizing contributions, highlighting progress, celebrating achievements, discovering opportunities, and generating new ideas, among others (Fried & Rodríguez-Mena, 2011; Rodríguez-Mena & Corral, 2015b).

The main moments of change refer to the elaboration of learning goals in which a self-reflection of each person is made possible to identify their place in the community, what changes they could face, how difficult it would be to assume them, and above all what would be the personal risks and dangers. It is generally thought that a learning action is satisfactory and even pleasurable, but when what is learned can modify the image of oneself or in the eyes of others, the issue is much more compromising. Emotions such as insecurity, achievement anxiety, diminished self-worth, and comparisons with others become the most common responses.

Other transcendental moments of change relate to communication among community members. In everyday situations of well-established communities of practice, this issue seemed easy to solve and even obvious because of the conditions and demands of the practice itself. And yet, during the application of the methodologies, the failures, the omissions, the meanings attributed but not thought out, the false interpretations, the reflection on the intentions of the other are immediately revealed. These issues are made conscious by the participants to the point of recognizing the need to reach different levels of communication, to move from a language of information exchange to a dialogue between equals.

Finally, the learning situations themselves. Knowing, for example, the learning styles; understanding how to articulate the actions of participants with different styles to solve certain tasks; constituting a team focused on solving a problem; negotiating the power quotas among all, the sequences of actions, the criteria for evaluating the results, and the approval of all members; and finally producing a concrete and evaluable result.

In all learning situations, evaluation turns out to be the most complex moment. In this case, evaluation encompasses several simultaneous and articulated dimensions. On the one hand, there is the direct evaluation of the group's result but also the participant's self-evaluation; on the other hand, a double evaluation of the direct learning achievement and of the personal and collective transformations that could be identified in the course of the learning situation. Sometimes, these transformations are expressed in behaviors, speeches, and emotional responses that are apparently remote and unrepresentative of the learning of a content; nevertheless, they are signaling changes in depth.

In all the empirical experiences in which we applied the methodology, there were curious similarities. One of the most interesting was linked to evaluation: in the first sessions, most of the participants evaluated themselves with high scores; however, as the sessions progressed, these values decreased, although for the purposes of direct achievement they could be considered acceptable. Somehow, participants felt dissatisfied and sought deeper changes in the mastery of their competencies, individually or collectively. One of the modifications generated by the empirical experiences suggested innovations in the mechanisms of formative control and evaluation, both external and internal. It was necessary to strengthen self-evaluation and co-evaluation: the subjects under investigation had to be simultaneously evaluated and evaluators, a device for observing their own practice.

Different techniques from the arsenal of group tools were used. Each of them and what they were used for can be explored in the publications reviewed. What was new here was not the application of the technique itself but its purpose. From the beginning, documents were prepared collectively to record each event that took place and the participants' reflection on its importance and the lessons learned. At the end of each session, an individual and collective evaluation record was applied, which made it possible to identify the changes that occurred in the participants' experiences about their learning, achievements, failures, ambivalences, and expectations. We called it "formative evaluation of competencies" because we insisted that the evaluation was part of the learning itself.

At the end of the cycle, there was a conclusive evaluation, which also included an evaluation of the program itself, making it possible to correct some of its dimensions. The most novel aspect was the maintenance of the evaluation beyond the program itself. It is frequent that the learning achieved during training sessions does not remain as domains

incorporated into individual or collective subjectivity. For this reason, a form of accompaniment was conceived, a follow-up of each participant in their daily contexts of execution to confirm that each competency learned really entered as a resource of their professional practice. This moment was crucial for the general conception of the project, because it reached the final purpose: the formation of competencies from the communities of practice that became learning communities.

Closing Reflections

The various experiences in the application of these social transformation devices have demonstrated the possibility of achieving the initial purposes of change that the communities themselves have outlined, but the most relevant aspect of these practices does not lie in achieving the fulfillment of the objectives but in understanding and perfecting the transformation process itself. Their achievements have allowed more competent people to learn and master the practices in which they are involved.

In this theoretical and methodological proposal, what is important is not only the place where one arrives but also the way of doing it, the way in which the process is experienced, and the resources that are mobilized to undertake the task. It requires continuous interpretation of each moment of change.

In our opinion, it confirms the usefulness of a theoretical integration that incorporates concepts and practices of transformation, conceived from different historical contexts, in a direction of personal emancipation and mastery of instruments of social and individual transformation. It shows the importance of social networks for learning, existing in every community. The peculiar combination between the concepts of learning, communities of practice, competencies, dialogue, and participatory methodologies reaches a special relevance in its application, which confirms the fecundity of the social-historical approach as an integrating metatheory. Social determination is the key to the understanding of learning that builds competent but self-determined people, always existing in networks and relationships. Thus, the fundamental postulate of this approach is achieved: the human being as the architect of his or her own improvement, always accompanied by others.

We are born and live in dialogues, in narratives about ourselves and others, in generative and complex learning, and we question ourselves. We narrate to others, who in turn narrate to us. A process of dialogue can give

rise to alternative narratives that in turn can generate new dialogues and new versions. Curiosity and interest allow us to approach the other, access the process, and remain open and receptive. The processes of creating alternatives and multiple perspectives open spaces for reflection and learning, which we represent in a plan. Dialogues, inquiries, narratives, and learning constitute this plan, which as social scientists we must be able to capture, unravel, and return to those involved so that we can continue to build.

Ethics then becomes a constant exercise of reflection on how we construct meaning, how we relate, and how we explore new relational contexts to re-create meanings. New forms of coordination of actions and intelligibilities emerge through the resignification of our ways of life, situated in concrete historical and social contexts.

In agreement with Bonaventura de Sousa (2003), accepting and revaluing chaos is one of the epistemological strategies that allow us to unbalance knowledge in favor of emancipation; but it is also necessary to revalue solidarity as a form of knowledge. Solidarity is the knowledge obtained in the—always unfinished—process of constantly recognizing and reconstructing intersubjectivity. When solidarity is emphasized, the community becomes the privileged symbolic context of emancipatory knowledge, which is not only episteme but also transformative social praxis.

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CHAPTER 4

After the End of the World: How to Orient Yourself in Thinking and in Life from Now On?

Plínio W. Prado Jr

In memory of those who have gone
when they could still be here with us.

1. The most immediate and manifest characterization of the present conditions is given by the biological, sanitary, and worldwide crisis: the Covid-19 pandemic, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Identified in Wuhan in November 2019, officially declared a pandemic by the WHO on March 11, 2020, it continues in progress today (May 2021), a year and a half later, giving way to new viral variants.

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It implies a general disorder, disorganizing down to the detail of the so-called Western way of life, with its usual "values" of competition, performance, acceleration, profitability, growth, governed by the rule of economic exchange, extended now to all aspects of life (nature, body, knowledge, language, affects). And therefore health, as well as education, also reduced to the status of merchandise.

And suddenly, this machine—the neoliberal system—confronted with the coronavirus that he did not know, not could or not want to foresee, is obliged to do what all managers and decision-makers said was impossible: *to interrupt* its work.

Suddenly it was possible to discover—not only, but *also*—the reverse of the catastrophe: the purification of the air, the revitalization of animals, the virtues of calm, of silence, and even of the rapprochement of oneself with oneself (with all the consequences that this meeting with oneself can entail).

Would this mean that, after the pandemic, there will no longer be a "return to normal," to the "normality" of the neoliberal world order and its forms of life, as the most lucid ecological and emancipation movements now desire and proclaim ?

Nothing is more uncertain. The dynamics of the system are programmed precisely to reproduce without limit, feeding on its own crises. The exponential enrichment, with the pandemic, of the largest companies on the Web and the pharmaceutical industry, along with the continued prosperity of oil companies and agro-business, already illustrates this dialectic of capital. As always, any change in the status quo will depend on the relationship of forces, on the fronts of struggle.

2. The advent of the Covid-19 pandemic sets the tone for the present condition. But it is "only" the ultimate revealer of the failure of modern civilization.

It is from within this general bankruptcy that we endeavor to outline here an answer to the question, henceforth: How to continue? (Beckettian question *par excellence* (1949), as shown by Theodor Adorno (1995)).

The current pandemic is not strictly biological, of course. On the contrary, it is a "total fact," a "disease of the Anthropocene" as has already been said (Philippe Sansonetti (2020)), inseparable from the industrial and social conditions of the civilization of "development"—neoliberal health management included—in which the emergence of new virus and its dazzling way of planetary diffusion could happen.

The malaise of this civilization, even its failure—the "crisis of neoliberalism"—has been getting worse for some time, long before the advent of the pandemic, and clearly since the financial crisis of 2007–2008.

The "developed" world, insofar as it prioritized the operativeness of the system, had already abandoned the term "progress" and the idea of emancipation that it connotes. In particular, since the beginning of the second decade of this century, it has been facing an unprecedented *regressive* turn: "death of democracy," "stealthy authoritarianism," and "democratic fascism"—whatever the name given to the deep political, ethical, logical, cultural, and civilizational setback that we are suffering. To the techno-scientific and neoliberal "dehumanization" in progress. The destruction of the human in us (and the inhuman element that, although beyond oneself, the human contains within itself).

This is what shows, among others, the general picture of the current state of the "organization of hatred" and of "small anxieties" of neo-obscurantism in the world of "microfascism" that surrounds us (as Gilles Deleuze (2003) would say). For example: the "climate-negacionismo," financed by Silicon Valley's tech billionaires, oil companies, and agro-business.

Then the figure, almost unimaginable 200 years after the century of Enlightenment, is installed, of a neo-fascinating obscurantism, openly ignoring, without complexes, the elementary moral imperative (which founds the discernment between good and evil), natural rights, fundamental freedoms, until the last pretensions of legitimacy of the so-called liberal democracies.

3. A finished expression of obscurantism, the contemporary terraplanism postulates a relativism: everything is opinion. Science would be an opinion among others, the moral imperative as well, and all opinions are relative and are equivalent, they have the same value. The conflict of opinions could therefore never be decided by a higher level than the level of opinions—an instance of argument, a court of reason. Hence the contempt for the debate, for the free and public use of reason. (Evidently, this postulation is a blatant imposture: because every time the terraplanist enters at the hospital to do exams or get on a plane, he betrays that, in the right time, he trusts fundamentally in science. All negationism is a quackery.)

What then makes an opinion able to beat its opponent and prevail? In the absence of argumentative confrontation, only force decides: violence, power, weapons.

Terraplanism demands a world without truth, without reason or right, governed only by the law of the strongest. (Such is the ultimate meaning of the abject insolence of the head of the Brazilian state: when asked about the slaughter taking place in the country, he replied: "So what?" "You may even be telling the truth, I may even be responsible for these deaths, so what? The master is me!")

In short: obscurantism is hatred for culture and for all knowledge, for the knowledge of science as well as the knowledge of spirituality, the "care of the self" (*cura sui*) Prado (2018).

Above all, it means forgetting the anamnesis work (the Freud's *Durcharbeitung*), surrendering intimacies, renouncing the practice of oneself and of thinking for oneself—and therefore, the elimination of teaching and the "teaching relationship"—and dismantling of research and of the university.

(Obscurantism is profoundly immoral, in the strict sense that Clarice Lispector (1964) gave to that term, in a letter to her sister, which should be understood in light of this condition of general dismissal: "What is truly immoral is to have given up on yourself.")

Obscurantism leads to its ultimate consequences and testifies, in a blatant way, to the failure of modern civilization. Bankruptcy of which—we insist—the current global health crisis, its possibility, as well as its catastrophic management in general, constitute, in several aspects, the most recent revealing.

This disaster of civilization attests definitively to the obsolescence of man and humanisms.

Baudelaire (1975–1976) had anticipated all this, in his visionary way, in a famous page in his diary (that inspired the title of these remarks): "*Le monde va finir…*"

Hence the question, on which we will return: How to orient oneself in thought and in life henceforth, after the ruin of faith in man postulated by humanisms? (Cf. Lyotard (1988, 1993), Lyotard & Prado (2018), Prado (2019), Sloterdjik (2013))

4. It is in this general conjuncture that Brazil elected in 2018, and maintains in the presidency of the Republic, a notorious imbalance, involved with local organized crime and the American extreme right.

Along with a troupe of ministers of rare incompetence, the current head of government commits crimes against the country almost every day. But the main crime, so to speak, his emblematic crime, consisted and

consists (since it is still ongoing) in applying to intentionally spread the SARS-CoV-2 virus among the Brazilian population.

Strategy responsible for the exorbitant slaughter by Covid-19 in Brazil—it is estimated that three out of every four deaths from coronaviruses were *preventable* —, not to mention its incalculable health, psychological, social, economic consequences for millions of Brazilians.

A crime against public health, therefore, under the alibi of applying the thesis of herd immunity by contagion. However, this thesis is known to be unfeasible in practice (the possibility of cases of reinfection already invalidates it), and it is criminal from an ethical and penal point of view: it kills massively. As *Imperial College* of London has demonstrated to Boris Johnson since March 2020, it would involve the infection of about 70% of the population, with an invaluable cost of loss of lives.

But all of this was manifestly never a problem for Jair Bolsonaro and his government—on the contrary.

Herd immunity by contagion, formulated by epidemiologists of a libertarian think tank of the American Institute for Economic Research, is an "epidemiological neoliberalism" (Isabel Frey (2020)). It is the transposition to the pandemic, to the circulation of the virus, of the principles of deregulation and flexibility applied to the economy. Thus, the economy's *laissez-faire* corresponds to *letting itself become infected* and *letting die* of this epidemiological management.

In doing so, it is the most vulnerable, the "weakest," who are affected. The management of the spread of the virus—the use, by the government of "good citizens," of the pandemic as a weapon—works as a "selection," a social Darwinism.

This therefore provided the Bolsonaro government with the opportunity to "take advantage of the pandemic," according to the government's slogan (*see* ministerial meeting of April 22, 2020).

Using the pandemic as a weapon, two converging objectives were pursued: (1) the deliberate extermination of entire fractions of the Brazilian population, the most vulnerable, precisely: poor, blacks, indigenous populations, and quilombolas, and (2) to foment health and social chaos, which should create the conditions serving as a pretext for the only project of the captain of the Palácio do Planalto, his obsession since always: the military coup, the control of the fundamental institutions of the Republic.

The use of the pandemic as a weapon of extermination is a crime that we can call *pandemicide* (at the cost of an alteration of the etymology). It constitutes a characterized genocide (whatever may be its technical legal

expression in the Criminal Court: crime of genocide, of extermination or against humanity).

5. This drift from a large country (sixth largest economy in the world in 2011), precipitated in a few years on the edge of the abyss, has the sad "advantage" of wide open the truth of neoliberalism. It shows, in a brutal way, that under the "liberal democratic" facade, neoliberalism, through its figures (elites, bankers, businessmen, politicians, judges, journalists), not only can comply with delinquency of State, but it demands this law-breaking. This essential pact of contemporary neoliberalism with barbarism presages the dark times that are coming and not just on the periphery of the system (see the fascisation underway in France today, in May 2021).

It is an "advantage" that has a very high, unaffordable cost (at the time I am writing these lines, the Brazilian "pandemicide"—more correctly: the deliberate use of the pandemic for the purpose of a planned massacre in the name of both business and Darwinist-social "selection"—is approaching half a million deaths, apart from underreporting).

That said, one question remains open and immense, which will nevertheless remain pending here: that of the incredible impunity of the Palácio do Planalto tenant, today and throughout his career.

He who is primarily responsible for the biggest death toll in history of Brazil, in addition to dozens of daily crimes of responsibility and various threats, both larval and open, of coup to the Republic.

He just won't have gone any further because of his worst enemy, which is "interior": himself. In contrast, the institutions of the New Republic, as well as the so-called democratic, progressive, cultural, university, student, opposition, and left-wing forces, have so far shown themselves to be intriguing and troubling ineffectiveness and have not really constituted themselves in practice as a resistance vector.

Rather, there is a general tendency (in Brazil, but not only), diffuse and permanent, to trivialize evil, to minimize, in this case, the conduct of an unbalanced person responsible for a crime against humanity, in the hands of whom the elites deemed it opportune (for their interests) to hand over the government of the country.

What to conclude from this ineffectiveness of institutions and progressive forces, from this trivialization of crime, from this accommodation, and from this lack of real and consequent indignation?

That in Brazil the sense of principles and rights, the sense of absolute respect for pain of the other and death demanded by civilization, the feeling of social responsibility, the feeling of solidarity with the excluded and

oppressed, and the culture of argued debate, democratic dispositions, are not values really consolidated?

What, then, is missing a true "culture work" (in the Freudian sense of the *Kulturarbeit*)? A lack that made possible the advent of current barbarism: cult of death and hate, banality of evil, conformism, resignation, and so on.

Does this mean that, as a result, we have failed or are we effectively failing as a country, as a national community?

In any case, the loss of self-esteem is noticeable in the country, and the generalized depression is observable.

The maxim of ethics according to Jacques Lacan (1986), "Do not give in to your desire!", refers to the imperative: do not give in to the reason for living.

Lacan quotes the Juvenal (1996) *Satires*: the greatest infamy is to prefer life to honor; it is to give up the reason for living to save your life, to *survive*, simply serving the "service of goods" (including desire for wealth, commodities, power, and so on).

And when you live endorsing what you condemn, notes Henry-David Thoreau (2018), the feeling of self-deprecation is inevitable.

6. I think that all these themes, mentioned above, are present in the correspondence between Freud and Einstein regarding the question "Why war?" (Einstein & Freud (1932)).

In the discussion that we had at Sedes Sapientiæ, in September last year[1], the accent was placed on the "work of culture," on *Kulturarbeit* precisely, and in particular the work of Eros in the construction of the link to the other, of a sharing in commun or a *sensus communis*, a community that passes through affect, identification, and empathy.

This civilizing work constitutes in itself (Freud underlined it together with Einstein) an elaboration that opposes war and the constellation of inclinations linked to it: hatred, reification of the other, destruction, the cult of death.

I recall only the two major axes that make up the civilizing pact here.

On the one hand, the axis of the *relationship* to the other, of *communitas*, the "We," demanding an internal regulation: morality, ethics, law,

[1] "The work of culture against the cult of war" lecture at the Department of Psychoanalysis of the Sedes Sapientiæ Institute, September 24, 2019 (available online). This talk was part of a cycle of conferences in Brazil held in September 2019, six months before the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic.

politics, On the other hand, the objectifying relationship to "reality,to nature (external or internal), a relationship established and governed by scientific knowledge, giving rise to the technical or technological transformation of its object.

It would be tempting to say: on the one hand, the Hebrew legacy of ethics (the psychoanalytic ethics of listening and anamnesis, *Durcharbeit*, included); on the other hand, the Greek tradition of knowledge and science.

Freud has always entertained an *Aufklärer* dimension, even if the thinker of the deep unconscious could not be reduced to it.

Note, by the way, how the barbary, in progress in Brazil (to stay in this exemplary case), breaks with these two axes of civilization.

On the first side, through the ubiquitous cult of hatred and death; it is the denial or the negation of all otherness. On the second, through the insane and irresponsible promotion of obscurantism and the destruction in particular of the entire culture of argumentation and debate (in favor of opinion forged without question in the so-called social networking).

Note that hatred is the common denominator of this double break with the civilizing pact: hatred of the other and hatred of knowledge.

Just as national-socialism would not have been possible without the media, in particular radio and cinema (Ph. Lacoue-Labarthe (1988)), neo-fascism would not have been possible without Twitter and fake news, resulting from the combination of the economic power of financial empires with the technological power of "networking." Neo-fascism is a "falsism" (as the Jean-Pierre Vernant group wrote). A *fascisme* of falsehood that remains unpunished.

The "work of culture," evoked in Freud's letter, sends us back to his essays prior to correspondence, in particular *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse* (Freud (1921)), *Die Zukunft einer Illusion* (Freud (1927)), and *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (Freud (1930)).

And above all, to the decisive text of 1920, concerning the work or drive regime of "unbinding" (*Entbindung*), of disruption "beyond the pleasure principle," called "death drive" (see *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*) (Freud (1920)).

The point is crucial, as it is here that Freud separates himself from Einstein, subtly indicates a criticism of the easy humanism of the physicist of relativity, and opens the way for what concerns us and really interests us from now on: a thought after humanism, a thought of the *after-humanism*.

7. In his response to Einstein, Freud takes a disconcerting view at first glance, in contrast to the usual criticisms of war. He also dismantles what common sense (and sometimes even psychoanalysts themselves) believes to mean "death drive" (*Todestriebe*, not "death instinct," as all translations say), because *it also has a role in culture work*.

War is not a "death drive," contrary to what psychoanalytic journalism says. It is the encounter of the drive of hatred and destruction (*Trieb zum Hassen und Vernichtert*), focused on an external object, *with* the violence inherent in the law and the central power of the community.

If we did not understand this categorical difference between *Todestrieb* and "hate drive" (*Hasstrieb*), we would not be able to make the radical and decisive distinction between, for example, the libidinal economy of the *avant-garde* works of art of the last century (e.g., futurism), exposed to the occurrence of the unexpected, and the libidinal economy of totalitarianisms (e.g., Italian fascism), which instead aim to control every occurrence.

(And if we want to investigate the so-called Office of Hate installed in the center of the Brazilian Presidential Palace, which coordinates the communication strategy in the "networking," it is in reference to this *Trieb*, the "drive of hatred and destruction," that it is convenient to place it.)

Freud still questions the very concept of *Kultur*, and the malaise that is *consubstantial* with it, and that increases as it develops.

In doing all this, he interrogates the humanistic faith and the simple pacifist desire (which Einstein still seems to embody). Affirming himself at the same time "viscerally" against the war. Freud outlines, in short, an anamnesis of the assumptions involved in humanism.

The human can only be placed as a supreme value, on condition that it projects outside itself—as a product of external conditions, which should be transformed—the *excess* that surpasses it and that it carries however *in* itself. In the wake of the Greek Tragics, Freud shows that what surpasses or transcends the human, this inhuman excess, is paradoxically constitutive of the human. It would be vain to want to eliminate it. If you persist in suppressing it, it would be tantamount to aggravating it. This error has engendered all fascisms and totalitarianisms.

The *excess* in question is what in us suffers and makes us suffer *in* civilization and *from* civilization. Our constitutive malaise. It may occasionally manifest itself under the regime of the drive of hatred and destruction (and directed against this very excess and its projections in the outside

world), but this is obviously not its only destiny. It is also what makes us think and write, love, and resist (ethically, politically).

And it is here that this letter from 1932 supports our thesis: claiming that the human constitutively carries *in* itself something that *exceeds* it; this thesis resolutely assumes, in its own way, the after-humanism.

Avant la lettre by Heidegger (1947) on "humanism," before the text by Adorno and Horkheimer (1947), and announcing the Lacan's seminar(1959-1960).

Such is the task, what remains to be thought, from now on.

8. Let us return to our initial question: How to orient ourselves in thinking and in life from now on?

The disaster outlined here, that of the failure of modern civilization, bequeaths to thought its task henceforth, more clearly than ever, which is to continue to think after human and after humanisms. Beyond all anthropomorphic horizon.

And it is there that we find Lacan's seminar devoted to the "Ethics of Psychoanalysis," built around the figure of Antigone—one that does not give in to his desire, which is faithful to unconditional desire (Sophocle (1989)). Tragic conception of ethics, which can occasionally call for civil disobedience (Thoreau (2018)).

The elaboration of a tragic ethics is precious and decisive today, under the conditions of contemporary nihilism (what we usually call "neoliberalism").

It testifies to the courage to cross the line of humanist philosophical ethics, placing the inhuman *thing*, foreign and intimate, "extimate" (*extime*), at the heart of ethics.

At the same time, making of it, of this inhuman, what is at stake, *par excellence*, in the work of art itself ("There is ethics only supported by an aesthetic," writes Lacan).

This converges admirably with the axiom that Adorno (1995) draws from the artistic and literary *avant-gardes* of the twentieth century: "[Art] is *loyal* to humanity *only* through *inhumanity towards it.*"

What *in* the human, however, *exceeds* it, this is precisely the nucleus, *la chose*, the *thing* that must be taken care of from now on.

Such is the last instruction that humanisms bequeath to us in its downfall.

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CHAPTER 5

Constitutional Patriotism and Neo-Thomism: Tendencies, Tensions, and Psycho-Social Effects in Legal Culture

Gisálio Cerqueira Filho and Gizlene Neder

In the present text, we want to problematize the expression "Patriotism of the Constitution" (*Verfassungspatriotismus*), used by the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas. We mainly highlight its effects in the arena of the ideological disputes that are sharply dividing contemporary society. The "patriotism of the constitution" (and its defense) has been adopted as a central strategy for repudiation and disdain of multiple expressions of particular political projects, whether ethnic in origins or not. It is almost always referred to as authoritarian, populist, and antidemocratic philosophy. It is "patriotic" not with regard to a person's ethnic roots, or with their place of birth, but with regard to the so-called democratic constitution of the State that supposedly covers all its citizens. In this sense, we call attention to the fact that the democratic and progressive aspects of

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modern constitutionalism may be mere appearance, especially when thought of abstractly. In other words, in spite of their supposed rational basis, they are apparently still immersed in metaphysics.[1]

For the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Zizek,[2] Habermas' interpretation is dangerous and conceals a de facto authoritarian stance under the guise of defending human rights or citizenship. According to this view, Jürgen Habermas forgot the basic lesson to be learned from the teachings of Carl Schmitt (1888–1985) and which involves a political division "between friend and enemy."

This division is never a matter of simply finding a factual difference: the enemy is, by definition, invisible in a crucial dimension. He looks like one of us, but cannot be directly identified, and this is why the biggest problem and the task of political struggle is to build and provide an identifiable image of the enemy.[3] In summary: for Zizek the identification of the enemy is always a formative procedure that, in contrast to its deceptive appearances, clarifies (constructs) the "true face" of the enemy.

Carl Schmitt refers to the Kantian category of *Einbildungskraft* (the transcendental power of the imagination). Conceptual sub-classification into pre-existing categories is not enough to identify the enemy: it is necessary to "schematize" him symbolically and endow him with concrete and tangible features that make him an appropriate target of hatred. A clear example of this happening in the past is what happened to Jews in Nazi Germany. Decanting such an imaginary image that has transcendental power (because it refers to beliefs and is immersed in the subjectivity of neo-absolutist feelings and fantasies) is a necessary task for political-ideological struggle.[4]

The enemy in contemporary times often seems to be associated, at least in Latin America, with new emerging leaders such as unionists, indigenous people, Afro-descendant people, residents of slums and the peripheries of large cities, NGO activists, and soldiers, among others. Many of the union leaders of different categories of workers who participated in the

[1] Habermas, Jünger. "Cidadania e Identidade Nacional", In *Direito e Democracia: entre Facticidade e Validade*, vol. 2, Rio de Janeiro: Tempo Brasileiro, 1997.

[2] Zizek, Slavoj. "O Filósofo Estatal", In *Caderno MAIS*, São Paulo: Folha de São Paulo, 03/24/2002.

[3] Zizek, Slavoj e Daly, Glyn. *Arriscar o Impossível: conversas com Zizek*, São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2006.

[4] Cerqueira Filho, Gisálio. *Autoritarismo afetivo: a Prússia como sentimento*, São Paulo: Editora Escuta, 2006.

governments of the Brazilian Workers' Party (PT) between 2002 and 2016 and moved through the ministries of Brasilia are part of this category. They were designated as a "new State bourgeoisie." This social category has aroused a certain amount of animosity among the "old State bourgeoisie" formed by elite intellectuals and families from traditional oligarchies.

Political leaders from these emerging social categories are necessarily "incomplete" in the literate Enlightenment tradition and appear to be inscribed in models of the "(im)perfect prince."

We refer to Carl Schmitt (1888–1985) and the Kantian category of *Einbildungskraft* (the transcendental power of the imagination) in order to identify the plausible enemy when politics is thought of in terms of the division between friend and enemy. This became very clear in the international context (for Europe and the USA) after the 9/11 terrorist attacks: the Islamic terrorist here fills the place previously destined for Jews in traditional Western xenophobic mythology. President Barack Obama even found himself in a debate with aspiring Republican candidate Mitt Romney over who would be America's number one public enemy: Russia or Islamic terrorists?

What is this contingent enemy in the Latin American political context of international relations? This is the question we propose to answer in connection with the concept "Patriotism of the Constitution" (*Verfassungspatriotismus*) and how it relates to this question.

We must emphasize the diverse historical formation of Latin America, always anchored in the relationship between law and violence that was present in Iberian colonization. For Emilio Garcia Mendez,[5] the historian Norberto Ras ("El Gaucho y la ley," Montevideo, 1999) brings this particular relationship of the law[6] back to the characteristics of the process of conquest and colonization. The absence of the father figure (which we have called "symbolic ignorance of the law") is a by-product of this relationship, for him. The nomadic and detached character of the gaucho inscribed in the hegemonic ideology of certain South American nations

[5] Emilio Garcia Mendez is a jurist and full professor of criminology at the *Facultad de Derecho* da *Universidad de Buenos Ayres*. He was also a federal representative in the Argentine National Assembly. See the speech he gave in the meeting of parliamentarians and journalists of the Southern Cone organized by the United Nation's Development Program (PNDP) in Montevideo, Uruguay, on June 20, 2000.

[6] Cerqueira Filho, Gisálio. *A Ideologia do favor e a Ignorância Simbólica da Lei*, Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Oficial do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, 1993.

(Argentine, Brazilian, Uruguayan, Paraguayan) embodies explains and reproduces the absence of the law as a mediating and ordering instrument of the violent social relations involved with colonization, serfdom, and slavery. An extremely useful vector for understanding the particular relationship between the societies of the "Southern Cone" with law, citizenship, and institutions is introduced here. The poem *Martín Fierro* is evidence of a trend that has become, essentially, invisible. The fabulous stylistic resource of Peruvian writer Manoel Scorza is exemplary here, in his work "História de Garabombo, o invisível" (The History of Garabombo, The Invisible).[7] The invisibility of the revolting indigenous leader Garabombo makes it possible to visualize the secular social inequality in which we are immersed as Latin Americans in general. A complementary confirmation of this particular relationship with law, citizenship, and institutions is presented by the theme of responsibility in its multiple manifestations. Hence, the concept of the parental function of the State with which the French jurist, medievalist historian, and psychoanalyst Pierre Legendre works with[8] (which we prefer to call parental responsibility of the State)[9] is present in both the national and international arenas and—in our particular—in Latin America. But we want to go beyond this vision to some extent. Here, we work with the emphasis that Habermas places on the concept "Patriotism of the Constitution" (*Verfassungspatriotismus*) and on its agglutinating capacity. Its theoretical power has the capacity to carry out or complete the construction of political hegemony in circumstances of great diversity and social conflict. It is not by chance that at the beginning of 2002, the former Prime Minister of Spain, José Maria Aznar, during the Congress of the Spanish People's Party (PP), then the ruling party, praised Habermas' concept. He came to identify *Verfassungspatriotismus* (patriotism-constitution) as a patriotic link to the democratic constitution of the Spanish state that also covers all Spanish citizens. Aznar thus raised this concept to a kind of model for Spain, despite the country's perennial separatist problems. Perhaps with some irony, he even proposed that his party declare Habermas as "the philosopher" of the Spanish state.

[7] Scorza, Manuel. *História de Garabombo, o Invisível*, Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1975.

[8] Legendre, Pierre. *Les Enfants du Texte*, Paris: Fayard, 1992. LEGENDRE, Pierre. *O Amor do Censor. Ensaio sobre a ordem dogmática*, Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 1983.

[9] Neder, Gizlene & Cerqueira Filho, Gisálio. *Ideias Jurídicas e Autoridade na Família*, Rio de Janeiro: Revan, 2007.

The obvious reaction, especially on the part of the Basques of Euskadi or the Catalans of Catalunya (both at the center of discussions regarding political autonomy in Spain), was one of mistrust, as well it might be.

Slavoj Zizek draws attention to the fact that in 1990, Habermas also expressed the opinion that "separatist" republics such as Slovenia and Croatia did not have enough democratic substance to survive as modern sovereign states, articulating a commonplace belief not just for Serbs but for most Western powers. Serbia was evidently considered to be the only regional ethnic group with enough substance to create its own democratic state.

Years later, even Milosevic's radical democratic critics who rejected Serbian nationalism acted on the same assumption that, among the former Yugoslav republics, only Serbia showed democratic potential. After the overthrow of Milosevic, only Serbia could become a thriving democratic state, while the other ex-Yugoslav countries would be too "provincial" to support their own democratic state.

Slavoj Zizek further deepens his criticism by asking whether this is not a past echo of Friedrich Engels' (1820–1895) well-known comments about small Balkan countries being politically reactionary, since their very existence was reactive (a reaction). Zizek calls the example "a beautiful case of reflective racism": racism that takes the form of rejecting the Other as racist, intolerant, and so on. In the same vein, the recent increase in anti-Americanism in Western Europe is not understood as solely due to the US intervention in Iraq but is partly a sign of some resilience to globalization. In Europe, this anti-Americanism is perhaps stronger in France and Germany, as it is part of the resistance to American leadership in the globalization process.[10]

For Slavoj Zizek, countries like Germany, France, and Great Britain are the ones that most fear globalization, since once immersed in the emerging global empire, they can be reduced to the same level as Austria, Belgium, or even Luxembourg.

The rejection of "Americanization" in France, shared by many left- and right-wing nationalists, is ultimately the refusal to accept the fact that France itself is losing its hegemonic role in Europe. The leveling of weight between major and minor country states is not understood to be among the beneficial effects of globalization: contempt for the new post-communist Eastern European countries often obscures the contours of

[10] Zizek, Slavoj. "O Filósofo Estatal", In *Caderno MAIS*, Op. cit.

the wounded narcissism of Europe's "great nations." As we said above, Habermas seems to have forgotten the basic lesson to be learned from Carl Schmitt: the necessity for a political division between friend and enemy.

After the collapse of the communist countries that, for a long time, provided an enemy in the Cold War, the power of transcendental imagination entered a decade of searching for adequate "schematizations" for the figure of the enemy. This search has progressed from the heads of communist countries to the leaders of so-called organized crime, drug cartels, the warlords of so-called villainous countries (Sadam, Noriega, Milosevic), Palestinian leaders, and so on, but without precisely defining a new focus. With 9/11, however, this imagination regained its capacity to assemble enemies, building the figure of Islamic extremist Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda and setting them on its invisible throne. *Terrorism* and the identification of "terrorists" was just one step in this process of building new enemies.

> What this means is that our liberal, pluralistic, and tolerant democracies remain profoundly "Schimittian": they continue to depend on political *Einbildungskraft* to provide them with the right figure that makes the invisible enemy visible. Far from canceling the "binary" logic of friend/enemy, the fact that this enemy is defined as the extremist opponent of pluralist tolerance only adds a reflexive bias. This demand by liberal societies, for an adequate image of the enemy is what Habermas does not take into account.[11]

With regard to South America, the political enemy is increasingly portrayed as a union leader, indigenous, Afro-descendant, living in slums or on the outskirts of large cities, or NGO militants, among others. Among South American political leaders, if Evo Morales appears as "*cocalero*,"[12] Hugo Chavez and Nicolas Maduro appear as "old populist leaders." Yesterday's Nestor and today's Cristina Kirchner are leaders of the "outdated project" of the Keynesian New Deal. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is a union leader who is "culturally unprepared." These are just a few examples we could name of this regional trend.[13]

The prejudiced criticism of these South American presidents does not only come from conservative or "right-wing" thinkers but is shared by "leftists" as well. It appears that left-wing political-ideological positions

[11] Ibidem.

[12] One who is connected to the cocaine trade.

[13] Fiori, José Luiz. "De volta para o futuro", In Jornal *O VALOR*, 31/03/2007, A-13

are often unaware of the "leftist guide to perfect manners." We prefer to say that the "perfect leftist" is the "perfect prince" or a "model of a prince" in the realm of bourgeois thought.

The concept of the individual is inscribed in the matrix of bourgeois political thought and, by contrast, the concept of the masses. The concept of the masses includes characteristics that tend to emphasize recognition. Refused recognition is understood as contempt.[14] Modern society, especially after the French Revolution, is an arena of widespread struggles for recognition. And, in this particular reading, the masses (the people) emerge in modernity representing a kind of pseudo-subject with whom it is not possible to establish relations without an element of contempt. This reading of the masses is about emphasizing adulation, mass manipulation, or people that some call populists, and emphases can be considered to be an inverted sort of contempt. And, in the same way that refused recognition is called *contempt*, physical contact that is avoided and repudiated deserves to be called *disgust*.

It is quite interesting to think of a history and logic of the dramaturgy of contempt by looking at its psycho-political basis as a constituent ingredient of the fantasy of the "perfect prince." This character responds to the absolutism of the market by centering himself narcissistic idealization. Thus, the concepts of "perfect prince" and "perfect market" become entangled, and the balance of one is a precondition for the balance of the other.[15]

Since opening up to the citizenship of and participation by the masses, modern societies habitually inaugurated their respective constitutions with the legal declaratory sentence that "all power emanates from the people and will be exercised in the people's name." The verb "emanate" is suggestive. It is not exactly associated with soft, perfumed fragrances that appeal to those who are sensitive to smells. To the contrary: "emanation"

[14] Sloterdjik, Peter. *Critique of Cynical Reason*, Mennesota: University Minnesota Press, 1997.

[15] The relationship between the "perfect market" and the "perfect prince" is described. Cerqueira Filho, Gisálio. *Édipo e Excesso. Reflexões sobre Lei e Política*, Porto Alegre: S. A. Fabris Editor, 2002. See also: Borrmann, Ricardo Gaulia. "Os Fundamentos Religiosos da Ideia de Mercado Perfeito em Adam Smith", In *Passagens. Revista Internacional de História Política e Cultura Política (on-line)*, Rio de Janeiro: vol. 2, no. 3, janeiro 2010, pp. 113–129; Borrmann, Ricardo Gaulia. *Tal mercado, tal príncipe: o paradigma da perfeição na economia política burguesa*, Master's dissertation (Mentor: Gisálio Cerqueira Filho), Niterói: Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ciência Política da Universidade Federal Fluminense, 2009.

is associated with bad odors that immediately impels us to cover our nose and refuse to recognize that which reeks. In the case of the aforementioned declaratory bourgeois constitutional sentence, what stinks—and therefore should not be recognized—are the popular sectors: the masses.

This lack of recognition of the popular sectors is associated with another concept, called "psychic immunological insufficiency."[16] It accounts for the peculiar circumstance of nonresistance and subjection to authoritarian, totalitarian power. That is, the individual or collective historical agents affected by authoritarianism/totalitarianism in some cases do not fight against oppression: they become apathetic, give up, and perish in the face of that power.

In a curious movement of inversion, the dignity of the subject as something to be extended to all was inaugurated by bourgeois thinking regarding the concept of human nature. Thomas Hobbes proposes this concept in terms of the intellectual task of thinking about the masses, but as subject, submissive, and obedient.

To the theoretical genius of this great bourgeois thinker, we owe the convergence between subject and servitude, both etymologically and in life as it's lived. The terms *subject*, in English, *sujet* in French, *subjekt* in German, and *sujeito* in Portuguese are interesting. To be developed as a subject, *the masses* appear in modernity as a homogenized multitude of subjects under a sovereign state that is technically invested in technologies of psycho-political control. The Benthian panopticon is an example here.

Bourgeois liberal political thought flows through Adam Smith's more genuine liberalism and advances during so-called postmodern and neoliberal globalization. It obviously does not abdicate the masses (subject-people): these are now understood as subject to the consumer market; a crowd homogenized through advertising and marketing technologies. In addition to the panopticon of penal control comes the control of global media society. If Bentham were alive today, he would own a TV network.[17]

The masses, as a confessed subject, must sensibly surrender their innermost emotions and also their thoughts, words, rebellious works, and protests—and also their omissions—to the artificial sovereign. In these terms, the masses, as a subject, must understand that to bend to the sovereign's

[16] Berlinck, Manoel Tosta. "La insuficiencia imunológica psíquica", In *Boletin de Novedades de la Libreria Pulsional*, São Paulo: Editora Escuta, 2000.

[17] Batista, Nilo. "O futuro não é o presente", conferência de abertura do XV Congresso Internacional de Direito Penal, Rio de Janeiro, 05/09/1994.

exclusivity is to recognize the Prince as the sublime incarnation of power, made rational. He is a super-ego of the masses, his subjects (to employ psychoanalytic language), which he must master with an iron hand.

Threat must thus always be hovering over the masses: a true sword of Damocles above the head of each subject in particular and of all subjects in general. The threat appears as the foundation of the absolutist mission, opposing politics as art as established by Machiavelli. In the case of Latin America, deeply infused with the political theology of Roman Catholicism, "politics as submission" does not allow one to conceive of "politics as art" in the bourgeois sense inaugurated by Machiavelli.

What are the consequences of this absolute subjection for the Prince—"*perinde ac cadaver*"—regarding his own fantasies about power? He finds himself having to hide the *vain glory* of bossing people around by *vainglories* about his bossing.[18] Such political absolutism is based on an absolutism of affect and emotion, where total and complete control is a harbinger of homicide. This only occurs when crossing the frontier into homicide, especially the killing of the Father as a symbol of political authority (regicide). It is worth mentioning parricide here, as Pierre Legendre and the legendary story of Oedipus remind us: Oedipus is king.…[19]

But where exactly does the conception of "patriotism of the constitution" intertwine with the construction of the binary friend/enemy logic? Or, to put it another way, how does Habermas—a defender of human rights whose philosophy and reflections on modernity have become references when theorizing about citizenship—let himself become entangled by the logic of the Nazi "state philosopher," Carl Schmitt?

First, it must be said that this position of "state philosopher" was described by Schmitt himself, in a 1922 text ("Political Theology") analyzing Donoso Cortés' clerical conservatism in Spain.[20] Then, we must take into account Schmitt's own intellectual and political history. This is

[18] Neder, Gizlene. *Iluminismo Jurídico-Penal Luso-Brasileiro: obediencia e submissão*, Rio de Janeiro: Freitas Bastos/ICC, 2000.

[19] Cerqueira Filho, Gisálio. *Édipo e Excesso. Reflexões sobre Lei e Política*, Op. cit.

[20] In this sense, we can understand the extent of Slavoj Zizek's comment in relation to J. Habermas' position regarding the small Balkan countries that supposedly do not have a "consistency and existential substance" capable of bringing the political field together in democratic constitutionalism. Employing the designation of "state philosopher" taken from the Habermas quote employed by the conservative Spanish Prime Minister, Zizek here emphasizes the ambivalences of modern constitutionalism.

especially the case because, having survived Nazism,[21] Schmitt (like several other German philosophers who had also previously joined Nazism) dedicated the latter part of his intellectual life to rewriting his texts in a movement of constant justification and redefinition, covering up his adherence to Nazism. He oversaw and guided the publication of (and acted to omit) several of his positions that during the dictatorship legitimized the "state of exception." His powerful legalistic thinking is based on the debate against the political positions of Kelsen's liberal and positivist legalism. This is especially the case with his formulation of sovereignty and the state of exception within modern constitutionalism, from which Schmitt sustains the sovereignty and decisions of governments in the face of crisis situations. The extent of the Schmittian position against liberalism can be assessed from his acid criticisms of Stuart Mill's defense of the rights of minorities or of the Liberal Constitution of the Weimar Republic.[22] Schmitt's criticism of the juridicist and positivist liberalism that, in his view, produces a judicialization of politics (or politicization of justice) is based on considering the (political) limits imposed on the full guarantees of the constitution. In this sense, we can highlight (in addition to the Schmittian observations) the fact that the juridicist fantasies of liberal constitutionalism and therefore of the legalist paradigm fit into a metaphysical perspective. Therefore, Carl Schmitt sought to situate himself in the realistic theoretical and philosophical field, but he was unable to escape the fatalistic perspective of neo-absolutism. He decided that it was necessary to use political intervention through the "state of exception" to solve the problems arising from situations of social and political crisis, or there would be "complete chaos."

In these times of "war on terrorism," of the establishment of several situations of *states of exception* (at the US base in Guantánamo, Afghanistan, and Iraq and in the reform of US legislation itself, which violates the civil rights principles of that country), the appropriations and historical updates of Carl Schmitt's work often fail to situate it historically. As we have already pointed out, the author was long-lived and had the time and ability to intervene in his own texts, especially with regard to allusions to Nazism. In this effort to retouch Schmitt's ideological and political affiliations, the

[21] Carl Schmitt was born in Plettenberg, in Vestfália (1888), and died in 1985.

[22] Schmitt, Carl. *La Defensa de la Constituición, Estudio de las diversas especies y posibilidades de salvaguardia de la Constituición*, Tradução de Manuel Sanchez Sarto, 1ª. Edição de 1929, Madri: Editorial Tecnos, 1983.

assumptions regarding the strength of the historical context (that of Nazism) that invaded and shaped his thinking (as if it were an involuntary choice) stand out. Against this absolving argument regarding Schmitt's choices, we can oppose other political thinkers who experienced the same historical context and were not seduced by the idea of the state of exception. To the contrary (and to touch upon Schmitt's greatest contender in reflections on sovereignty), we see Leo Strauss going into exile, like so many other German intellectuals. It could be argued that Strauss's Jewish condition left him no alternative. But what about the neo-Thomistic theologian, the Jesuit Heinrich Rommen,[23] or other authors in the liberal Catholic field, who went through experiences of extreme political and ideological discomfort? Discomfort because, not adhering to socialism (let alone communism), they remained in the liberal-conservative field built by the legalist paradigm (some of them even remained monarchists, as was the case with the Portuguese law historian Paulo Merêa) and also dedicated themselves to discussions of sovereignty[24] while not adhering to the Hobbesian perspective of the state of exception, as did Carl Schmitt.

However, the best lesson to be learned from Schmitt's intellectual history come with the realization that his political choices can be reconfigured and disguised (and even seriously considered as worthy of mercy from a personal point of view, when looking at his sincere review of his adherence to Nazism) but never eluded by the historians of ideas.

We must, therefore, place "Political Theology" within the perspective of the "sociology of concepts" (or the history of concepts) without—we insist again—forgetting the lessons to be learned from Schmitt's positions. This perspective is well situated in Schmitt's 1922 text, which received a new preface in 1933 (the year of Nazism's rise to power). The text was also rewritten in 1969 (receiving the title "Political Theology II").

The problem of historically and sociologically situating concepts is an innovation in terms of looking at the historical context of the interwar period. Schmitt's is an intelligent text that has produced seduction and enchantment, especially because the process itself (historically and sociologically situating concepts) is a relevant methodological procedure,

[23] Neder, Gizlene. *Duas Margens. Ideias Jurídicas e Sentimentos Políticos* …, op. cit.

[24] Merêa, Paulo. *Suárez, Jurista*, Memoria presented during the tricentenial of F. Suárez, S.J. (Doctor Eximius), with the objective of studying his work. Granada, setembro, 1916. Códice SC115158 BNL, Lisbon. Merêa, Paulo. *Suárez, Grócio e Hobbes, Lições de História das Doutrinas Políticas, feitas na Universidade de Coimbra* (Curso de Licenciatura em Ciências Políticas), Coimbra: Armênio Amado, 1941, 118 p.

formulated on Marxist conceptions about the production of knowledge that have been around since the mid-nineteenth century: it can still be undertaken, regardless of the analyst's political philosophy. In the context surrounding Carl Schmitt's formulation of the "sociology of concepts,"[25] Émile Durkheim's sociology was beginning to gain fame, and there were many appropriations and approaches to other fields of knowledge, especially law. Given the fact that Reinhart Koselleck's[26] texts have recently become an intellectual fashion in the field of humanities in Brazil (particularly history and the social sciences), it is worth noting how we perceive and refer to his contribution. Koselleck writes employing "Political Theology II" in the troubled 1960s. He adopts the idea of the history of "sociology of concepts," one of Carl Schmitt's themes in "Political Theology." This is a creative and innovative formulation of Schmitt's thematic point of view, as we have said, in the context of the impact caused by the theory of relativity in different fields of knowledge. Koselleck, however, does not adopt the Schmittian philosophical foundation, especially Schmitt's binary friend/enemy logic. To the contrary: his "history of the concept of revolution," for example, is developed in a perspective that is critical of binary logic appropriated by the Enlightenment philosophy in the processes of struggle and empowerment of the bourgeoisie in Europe. Koselleck's thesis is very sharp: his conceptual constructions that support interpretations of modern revolutions secularizes politics but does not completely replace metaphysical conceptions (the "transcendental power of the imagination") that continue to operate in the process of political legitimation. Carl Schmitt helps us here because he clarifies this in his "Political Theology," only to justify sustaining the "transcendent" legitimacy of the state of exception in Nazi Germany.

This formulation is important because it concerns the dismantling of Western Christianity's political theology (both Catholic and Protestant). Koselleck allows us to conceptualize the differences between secularization and laicization that were developed by Giacomo Marramao's philosophy of history.[27] Through a dense debate with the bibliography referring on sociology and the history of concepts, as well as with the philosophies

[25] Marx, Karl. "Introduction à la Critique de l´Économie Politique". In *Constribuition à la Critique de L´Économie Politique* (1857), translation by Maurice Husson & Gilbert Badia, Paris: Éditions Sociales, 1972, pp. 147–175.

[26] Koselleck, Reinhart. *Crítica e Crise*, Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto/EdUERJ, 1999.

[27] Marramao, Giacomo. *Poder e Secularização. As Categorias do Tempo*, tradução de Guilherme Alberto Gomes de Andrade, São Paulo: EdUNESP, 1995.

of history and law, Marramao shows that so-called modern capitalist societies inscribed within Enlightenment rationalism may have been secularized, but not laicized. Secularization is conceived here as a process that was not foreign to Western religious culture. After all, since the bloody religious wars between Catholics and Protestants in the sixteenth century, secularization has been repeatedly pointed out as a possible strategy for political conflicts arising from theological disagreements. It has been particularly effective, in this respect, with regard to the distribution of the political administration functions of society. Laicization, on the other hand, implies a radical rupture, from a philosophical point of view, with any and all transcendental conceptions, especially in the political field.

This whole discussion directly affects the way we think about the process of appropriation and historical updating of the thoughts of São Tomás de Aquino at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century. Neo-Thomist scholasticism implied rescuing of Santo Tomás' theology (since then called philosophy) in its political aspects. It should be noted that from the point of view of Roman Catholicism, this ideological movement sought end to more than a century of political discomfort that was translated into great political division (more political than theological) within the Roman Church. Since regalism (and Jansenism) and, later, the French Revolution of 1789, the Church had been ideologically divided among ultramontans (defenders of the *regressita* political positions of clerical conservatism) and illuminated liberals who defended the modernization of the church through its adoption of liberal positions.[28]

The appropriation and historical updating of Thomism and Thomist political philosophy had already occurred, however, in the context of the advancement of secularization and modernization in Western societies.[29] This constituted a great ideological movement that brought together and organized worldviews, allowing intellectual processes of various combinations, but in a way that was heavily linked to positivism. It was, therefore, a process of cultural appropriation, where the legitimating function of the political field came to be exercised simultaneously by science and the "transcendental power" of the imagination over sovereigns (now no

[28] Cerqueira Filho, Gisálio. "Augusto Teixeira de Freitas por Joaquim Nabuco. Ultramontanismo versus Catolicismo Ilustrado", In Neder, Gizlene and Cerqueira Filho, Gisálio. *Ideias Jurídicas e Autoridade na Família*, Op. cit., pp. 83–94.

[29] Neder, Gizlene. *Duas Margens. Ideias Jurídicas e Sentimentos Político em Portugal e no Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro: Revan, 2011.

longer monarchical). The concept of sovereignty was expanded and shifted (like the concept of revolution, as analyzed by Koselleck) towards the definition of state sovereignty (another topic dear to Carl Schmitt).

In view of this framework of the main questions raised at the time, it becomes necessary to highlight the fact that the political theology of Saint Tomás de Aquino is based on an agglutinating conception that, if and where it admits alterity, implies a linkage of differences within view of human societies as organized and integrated wholes composed of parts that work together in harmony. Differences[30] (and different people: indigenous people, Afro-descendant people, unionists, and etc. in the case of Latin America) can exist within this neo-Thomist worldview and even gain recognition and legitimacy (existentially speaking), but only so long as they accept and submit (as submissive subjects) to the place assigned to them by the "transcendentally" constituted powers. That is to say, the transcendental power of the imagination acts as a filter to label (as a seal of quality), subjectify, and weigh the existential substance of each (from the sociological and political point of view) of the great sociological minorities in Latin America. In this case, it is not a matter of subjectively weighing the consistency of the substance of any of the Latin American states (even those that were invented by imperialist interests in the nineteenth century), as in the Balkans analyzed by Slavoj Zizek. Here, we are faced with a combination of old colonial issues (among them the very legitimacy of the genocide of indigenous people and slavery) and the processes of appropriation and historical updating of ideas of obedience, submission, social integration, sovereignty, and, finally, citizenship. This is all conducted in a postmodernity that speaks constantly of a "citizenship" ("Citizenship, we see it here!" is the slogan of a major television channel in Brazil) that is emptied of the very concept through the naturalization of the idea of citizenship itself. Nilo Batista warned of the fact that the concept of citizenship, expanded as it has been in contemporary times, has slipped away from the public sphere and is undergoing a frank process of privatization.

> What is being called citizenship in peripheral late capitalism, from media discourses to legal discourses, is something that completely extrapolates from the conceptual limits that political science initially established and

[30] Neder, Gizlene. *Iluminismo Jurídico-Penal Luso-Brasileiro: obediencia e submissão*, Rio de Janeiro: Freitas Bastos/ICC, 2000.

> constitutional law later embellished upon. Such extrapolation—which operates with surprising multiplicity of meanings—tends to significantly transfer the issue of citizenship from the public sphere in which it was born and created to an individualistic—or better yet, privatizing—approach.[31]

For all of these reasons, the decisive potential of power in modernity lies in being able to authentically threaten: that is, to show all subjects (but enemies in particular) that what rules power is death. Take the example of the police invasion of Carandiru Prison in São Paulo, where the cry of the commando teams that broke into penitentiary was, precisely, "I am death."[32] Why does the current State convert itself so readily and quickly into the *Lethal Weapon* of Hollywood?

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[32] Neder, Gizlene. "Em Nome de Tânatos. Aspectos da Hisória do Sistema penitenciário no Brasil", In *Violência e Cidadania*, Porto Alegre: Sérgio Fabris Editor, 1994, pp. 11–34.

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CHAPTER 6

From Social Perception and Social Representation to Social Imaginary in Social Psychology Theory and Research

Raudelio Machin Suarez

Introduction

Social psychology, from its inception, has had to deal with the spectre of collective subjectivity. Is there such an entity? If it exists, how can we account for it? What would be (are) the most appropriate methods for its study? There have been several theoretical-referential frameworks that have tried to answer these questions. The most representative from the point of view of his research are studies of *social perception*, the theory of *social representations* and the conceptual framework of the *social imaginary*. The first is a common field, shared not only by psychology but by other humanists and researchers in the social sciences and applied philosophy or cultural studies, among others, based on the epistemic assumption that there are significant differences between social reality and reality

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perceived or represented and, in turn, that these representations tend to be more or less commonly representative of certain topics in certain population groups.

The *theory of social representations*, attributed to Serge Moscovici, has its antecedents in Durkheim, in particular his conception of collective representations. Probably, the most significant contribution of Moscovici and his followers has been the elaboration of an operational framework for its empirical study and the validation of such entity by statistical criteria. In other words, to support the idea that representations are sets with varying degrees of agglomeration around a nucleus. At the same time, it supposes that such a nucleus of a representation exists if there are statistical criteria on its existence. Of course, holding a numerical entity to account for a subjective reality was not new. Still, its application to the field of collective subjectivity has allowed evaluating trends of groups, communities and social subjects around objects and cultural processes of relevance in a period determined. In other words, it has served its political mission well, of social psychology, not alien to the demand to answer about what happens outside the academy, right in the space of "the social".

Finally, *social imaginary* is a much broader concept. Although, however, some also relate it to Durkheim, a leitmotif of the theories that revolve around it. It was an attempt to account, theoretically and methodologically, for a subjectivity that exceeds individuals. It is not only the effect of representations but also the causes of reality. In that sense, it stands as an anti-representationist bet (Gergen, 1994), but, at the same time and essentially, de-representationist. In other words, the idea that, as for the subject, not all reality is representable. Rather, its existence is sustained on what does not cease to be registered; this non-inscription generates signs beyond what is instituted for the collective level. This last bet has been the one that has generated many of the new research trends on social imaginary: identifying those imaginary emergencies, signs of inscription, attempts of inscription and repeated resistance to the inscription, as well as their effects on the real and instituted of the structures and social dynamics.

This chapter will review the current state of the discussion on these issues and the author's contributions in the studies on *social imaginary* in social psychology, particularly the theory of emergent social imaginary.

The Assumption of Collective Subjectivity(s)

The study of the collective subject(s) existed since before psychology and, of course, before social psychology. The specificity of social psychology has probably been in the relationship between identifying that object of study as one's own and the attempts to define theories or methods that would account for its existence.

However, before delving into the methodological peculiarities and the epistemic assumptions that the approaches to its study implied, it is necessary to review some of the premises of the very idea of collective subjectivity and of a collective subject, which has accompanied social psychology for so long.

As is known for Durkheim, the collective conscience represented an independent entity of the individuals, but that did not sustain itself without them. At the same time, it performed a coercive function over their acts, with greater or less intensity, according to the degree of social organicity. Durkheim (1895), despite intuiting certain immanence for collective representation, nevertheless emphasized the idea of the existence of collective subjectivity, independent of both the material and individual subjectivity. On his part, the idea of degrees[1] is the one that will have the most impact on the theory of social representations, particularly due to its numerical and vector emphasis. From other disciplinary referents, McDougal, with the notions of collective thought, feeling and actions, tried to account for those phenomena of collective subjectivity. In Wundt, the idea of a *Völkerpsychologie* also anticipated the existence of subjective phenomena resulting from collective human links and contexts, from human communities and "(…) inexplicable in terms of an individual conscience" (Wundt, 1916, p. 6)

These lines that anticipated cartography of what would be the collective subjectivity, derived from the empiricist tradition, and the notions of "conscience", "representation" and "intentionality" revealed certain confidence in the existence of control over these processes. In this way, they constituted antecedents of the construct of "social representations". What escaped this in Durkheim and acquired a more "idealistic" status, accompanied by the idea of a collective unconscious, was later combined in the emergence of the concept of social imaginaries.

[1] Tangential to Durkheim's theory and only associable with procedural reasons, it can be associated with the subsequent reworking of dimensions by Giddens (1967).

In 1912 Durkheim wrote about the similarities and differences of a "collective conscience" in different societies according to the degree of relationship of men with themselves and with the rules of relationship in the community; already from his first works at the end of the nineteenth century, he pointed to facts that belong to that relationship; they are neither of the individual nor of society (Durkheim, 1976); by that same date, Wundt commented that the objective of the Völkerpsychologie should be precisely the "study of the mental products that are created by a human community" (1912, p. 7). In both, beyond the differences in the theoretical approaches that attempt to account for such claims, an underlying assumption was no less problematic. Is there a subjectivity beyond the individual? If there is, what is its support or objective reference? What are the indicators of its existence that could lead us to its affirmation?

There are common elements in certain "founding fathers" usually distanced by the followers of one or another current, which deserve particular attention, if we want to elucidate certain problems, with relative independence of the ethos and institutional and union legitimations to which without a doubt it is also subjected psychology as a human practice. In this sense, we find, for example, both in Freud and in Vigotsky, allusions to the presence of culture, of the social bond, in the configuration of the subject. As good antecedents to all social psychology, they were opportunely cited by social psychoanalysis traditions or social psychology with a Marxist orientation or cultural-historical approach.[2] However, most authors refer to that influence from the external on the internal in both traditions: psychoanálisis and the Historic-Cultural approach. In that point, it is common to leave aside appreciations that connected both Freud and Vigotsky with notions that would suppose the existence of a Collective Subjectivity. Collective subjectivity means for both of them; support for individuality, but having a presence beyond the individual; previous his borning, and despite him and with effects on the individuals and the space he inhabits and builds.[3] This support is equivalent to the existence of a dynamic and a space that sustains, produces and reproduces subjectivity and that at the same time has objective effects, carried out in the space of culture and with new effects on itself, on institutions, on the social praxis

[2] Wrongly grouped by several of its theorists (Theo, Iñiguez, Held); under the label of "critical social psychology".

[3] An idea that also, as Holt (1989) points out, citing Ellenberger (1970), they already had antecedents in the German psychiatric environment and even more so in the French one.

and on individuals themselves. In this sense, each of the places with which the supposed existence of that collective "entity" is related should be from those references, places to look for material for its eventual affirmation, reconstruction, description and interpretation.

One of the objections on which Castoriadis' theoretical model is based is precisely that which reveals the inability of the Marxist tradition to take charge of the objectifying and instituting effects of this collective subjectivity, which Marx could not deny in his model,[4] but which was forgotten in the Marxists.

What Have Been the Social Perception Studies?

Category "social perception" as a methodological reference is used in social psychology and social science research, sociopolitical studies and sociocultural studies. It is common, to find some authors that erroneously connected the concept of "Social Perception" with the notion of "perception" as a process of the individual psyche. "Social perception" is actually a metaphor born after the decline of objectivism in the humanities and social sciences. It recognizes that "social facts" are not data in themselves but are a reading made of them by the social subjects that they are "represented". In this sense, strictly speaking, the most immediate antecedent of the notion of "social perception" would be, like many of the approaches to studies on collective subjectivity, Durkheim's concept of collective representations.

It is also necessary to point out that most studies on "social perception" of some phenomenon, despite assuming an approach to the existence of a collective phenomenon, in fact, what they do is study individual perceptions. In other words, although its results are stated as collective perceptions, being the result of massive studies in individuals and their response in a "private" way, they only have as a reason to affirm the existence of that "collectivity", a mathematical reason.

[4] In several places, but in particular, in the Grundrisse, Marx affirms the idea of the process the dialectic of the processes of objectification—subjectivation, which, unlike Hegel, holds on the community, on the one hand, the need of others in this process of subjectivation and after self-objectification, and later, through an abstract representative, as a possibility (See Marx, Karl (1858/1985), p. 137 ff.).

The presumption of congruence in individual perceptions is obtained as a systematic conceptual reduction in the construction and elaboration of such massive instruments—surveys, online questionnaires and so on—and the conceptual adjustment of the results of those instruments. Therefore, they do not contain any other support than the statistical behaviour of these "data". In this sense, there is no other indicator, in this conceptual frame, of the existence of truly collective phenomena.

These studies are valid for making political, economic, epidemiological decisions and so on. Still, they can hardly be sustained as a reflective and interpretive space of culture and society as phenomena that transcend, anticipate and produce the individual.

Social Representations from Serge Moscovici

As with the notion of *social perception*, here we do not intend to dwell on describing in detail the theory of social representations, on which abundant literature can be found, but rather place it epistemologically concerning its contribution to research on the problem of collective subjectivity (Moscovici, 1961; Jodelet, 1984, 1991).

Regarding social representations, it is common for the term to be associated with the notion coined by the social psychologist Serge Moscovici. However, before his work, there is enough research in sociology that is very similar in theoretical and methodological approaches. Thus, despite also having Durkheim as a more immediate theoretical antecedent, his work undoubtedly constituted an important contribution to social psychology, leaving the laboratory, the restricted notions that cloistered social psychology in university chairs, and putting it to the service of society and culture.

On the other hand, his contribution refers to the possibility of taking into consideration the knowledge of "common sense", the popular knowledge, that several of the authors of critical social psychology tried to claim, but in this case, based on how this knowledge is put into action in a life experience of the collective subjects in a particular context and, above all, how the researcher can account for this process of passing from these representations to acts.

However, Moscovici was unable to identify indicators of the existence of this collective subjectivity either, since his methodological emphasis led him to define the vector ranges that demarcate the existence of this

subjectivity, rather than to its social precipitate, his first attempts for defining social representations as guides of individual behaviour in congruence with the collective.

At the same time, these guides result—in Moscovici's theory—from social interactions, and as such, they can already be understood as a collective object. Thus, this genealogical antecedent of the representations and their condition of mapping the links between them and the various plots/world and their linguistic and praxeological substratum gives a double status—"individual/collective"—to the concept "social representation".

In proposing a way of approaching these representations, this double condition is the first element that begins to be problematic from the epistemological perspective. The result ends up being, as in the methodology to investigate social perceptions,[5] instruments that, gathering information from the individual, try to resolve the collective nature of the findings by mathematical means, in this case, vector.

Thus, the existence of phenomena of collective subjectivity is associated with the double condition of representativeness and closeness to the "shared" nuclei—statistically relevant indeed—of the various notions of representation generated around a phenomenon in a given community.

How are these notions produced in the individual? Is there a collective equivalent of these notions? How to affirm that collective character beyond the statistical correspondence? How to take charge, methodologically, of the circulations in the public space of said representations? These are questions not resolved by this tradition.

At the same time, the expectation that they are always susceptible to empirical study, the "requirement" of congruence between the representations, brings them much closer to positivism than to other traditions to which this theory is said to be an heir. In the same way, the definition of "social representations" as ways of reading reality resembles what was named by several in social psychology as "representationism" (Gergen, 1994), despite its explicit theoretical nexus with symbolic interactionism and social constructionism.

Despite Giddens himself (1967), take distance from the positivist Marx, assimilable to Comte as he affirms, despite his clear emphasis on connecting his work to the Marx of the "well-founded investigation of the

[5] This is not by chance since their main theorist recognizes them as perceptions programmes in these social representations.

historical interconnections of *subjectivity* and *objectivity* in human social existence" (Giddens, 1967, p. 14); the tradition of social representations, obtain from him and from Durkheim himself, the positivist nuances that he tried to avoid.

Social Imaginaries from Cornelius Castoriadis

The continuous return of the incompatibility of bringing together the Freudian and Marxist epistemes (Machin, 1998) reappears in the work of Castoriadis (1994, 2015) via the concept of social imaginary and the inscription in the institutional of the unrepresentable. The solution it offers is precisely in finding, in the instituble, not instituted, forms of expression of the imaginary beyond the objective (Machin, 2005). The problem arose precisely when an attempt was made to give sociological forms to these social imaginaries, such as they did some traditions of sociology.[6]

The notion of social imaginary undoubtedly shares the trace of ambiguity and the dispersion of uses according to disciplinary emphases. It is used in both social psychology and sociology, in philosophy or other humanities. It is common to find the term "imaginary" both in the singular or plural in papers, books, or lectures on social psychology, sociology, art and literature criticism. This category, in general, has in common the reference to subjectivities shared by subjects of a certain community or real or virtual common space, which takes as its nucleus some referential object for its anchoring. However, there are certain differences between sociological, psychological or literary notions of the social imaginary. In art criticism studies, it is common to refer to the imaginary created or constructed by an author's work, referring to a complex world of representations created, for example, by a writer of short stories, novels and poetry, which is peculiar to its construction site. Images that appear when one delves into his different products sometimes create a culture or set of representations shared by those who approach his work, either as regular readers of his texts or as critics devoted to the study of his work.

[6]The tradition that brings together the sociologist like Pintos and several of the schools and groups legitimized by them (Pintos, 2012) has constituted a long tradition with concrete empirical contributions to the studies of social subjectivity, taking as a reference the term social imaginary; however, its methodological re-elaboration for empirical sociology has had to pay the cost of the positivization of the concept.

On the other hand, most sociological studies have approached a notion of studies of social imaginaries, relatively close to the notion of social representations developed by Serge Moscovici and the followers of this tradition, insofar as they attempt to quantify, give a certain weight—positive, measurable—to the representations they study. In this tradition, the approaches of J.L. Pintos and Ibero-American sociology could be cited, particularly interested in developing it as an "operational research model" (2012, p. 15). This perspective, which Pintos himself qualifies as "systemic constructivism" (Pintos & Aliaga Sáez (coords.), 2012, p. 15), is inscribed in a certain sense in a Western rationalist tradition, with the clear tendency to identify comprehensive forms of its object of study. The main limitation of this approach to social imaginaries is its reduction to collective representations[7] and social identification processes. Castoriadis' notion of social imaginaries[8] is reduced to what is instituted as an effect, resulting from the instituting nature of social imaginaries.

Relatively different from the previous one, we find approaches to the studies of social imaginary, closer to social psychology and psychoanalysis, whose most important features we will be analysing.

Durkheim and the Collective Representations Are the Most Immediate Antecedent

Emile Durkheim is one of the most immediate antecedents in all the previous notions of social representations. However, the emphasis is placed on some statements and features or others, depending on what has been highlighted in each theory.

Within the tradition that we are interested in highlighting here, the later developments of the notion of social imaginary appear linked to the work of Cornelius Castoriadis, in particular, understanding that with Castoriadis, the notion of social imaginary came to try to resolve the relative contradiction in the compression of collective subjectivity between the Marxist and psychoanalytic tradition. His notion of social imaginary,

[7] "Social Imaginaries would be (…) collective representations that govern the systems of identification and social integration, and that makes social invisibility visible (…)" (Pintos, 1995, p. 7) (Our translation).

[8] Whose theory always represented a clear resistance to identifying them with processes of representation or rational spaces. It can be reviewed for more details in Chapter III, "The institution and the imaginary" 1987 [1975], The Imaginary Institution of Society, trans. K Blamey, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA. Chapter III (pp. 183–265).

on the one hand, offers Marxism the possibility of giving continuity to the idea of the processes of objectification and de-objectification in social determination, relatively abandoned by the developments after Marx, with an overemphasis on the notions of political economy. In the same way, the subjective production processes of societies are identified, which, unlike what had been remarked in the Marxist tradition, not so in Marx,[9] are not necessarily attributable to social consciousness but to immanent forms that exceed the ability to be consciously represented by the social or acting subjects of their time. For this affirmation, Castoriadis undoubtedly takes the representations of psychoanalysis from which he will also have received systematic training. In this way, he manages to outline a notion that accounts for collective "representations" that are not only representatives and mirror of the instituted, of the symbolic, of the actions of the subjects and of their praxis, but also—and in this it is their emphasis—they are instituting, they have the capacity to institute, to create new institutions.

Developments after the work of Castoriadis allow us to identify that although its instituting character is its main feature, to advance beyond the limits of economic supra-determination, the social imaginary is not exhausted in the institution but exceeds what that it manages to institute. Those institutional remnants are diversifying so that at some point, they will end up reinstituting or fracturing the limits of the institution that contains them (Machin, 2000) or, on the other hand, obtaining realization through social praxis. This collective praxis will become a way of making these social imaginaries viable, giving way to their representations and the energy contained in them.

The study of these collective actions, of the form of expression of the social subject, whether or not it leads to institutionality, is another way of approaching social imaginaries. For their part, these imaginaries—and in that sense, it was also an important antecedent of contemporary affirmations—have expressions, relatively less pragmatic, more purely representational. Those representations are put into action and scenes in the form of colour and external sounds. These expressions, understood by some as performative, exceed this condition. The social imaginaries—fundamentally those that fail to establish themselves or that do not acquire an

[9] In several passages, from the Grundrisse, for example, Marx (1858, pp. 622–623; 716–717; 942–943) highlights the difference between real and imaginary processes of societies and instituting effects, although he is more interested in the latter and the processes of capitalist institutionalization and their subsequent effects on the imaginary.

expression in the social, political praxis—take all the spaces of cultural expression. The study of those cultural objects that describe the existence of a community allows an approach to their social imaginary. Their linguistic expressions, jokes, ways of walking, gesturing and dressing, even the most visible expressions in their music, dances, paintings, photography or video, are ways of re-creating an existence in images. The interventions made of the environment—in many cases of the "instituted environment"—are a way of leaving the mark of these representations and, in many cases, of showing a differentiated way and even contrary to the instituted ones. These interventions become particularly relevant when they become the body itself, transgressing the boundaries of the limits defined for the sexual, modifications to the hair, the skin—tattoos, piercings, rings—or the body itself. One of the most significant elements is the de-definition of the limits of fashion and clothing, returning to civilizing moments where it was not clear when these additions were useful clothing and when they were part of the subject's expression; where it was not clear when the intervention was on the clothes and where it was on the body itself. This almost casuistic delimitation that occurs in social imaginaries as a cultural expression accounts for many of the areas still unexplored in studies on social imaginaries.

On the other hand, it is necessary to emphasize that although one can be affirmed that social imaginaries are *collective representations of the world and societies*, they are *also pre-codifications.* They codify expectations; anticipate events, social acts and institutions; and generate cultural effects. In that sense, it cannot be reduced to its effects, although it is in them that they are updated. On the one hand, they are representations, but at the same time, instituting agents, anticipations of social action and cultural productions (creation). Their potentiality and moment of creation and their emergence is in that sense the most relevant for their study.

The Social Imaginary Can Be Ambivalent and Contradictory: Not Necessarily Congruent

One of the most significant contributions of studies on social imaginary is associated with recognizing the ambivalence and even contradictoriness of these representations. In the studies of social representations, the representation congruence and a certain per cent or degree of shared ideas

between the individuals are expected. The concept of social imaginaries assumes that social imaginaries can contain contradictory representations or be ambiguous and ambivalent, without defining inclinations for the alternatives that the institution offers. In this tradition of the studies of social imaginary, these features are identified from their beginnings, among other reasons, probably because of the connection that Castoriadis' work has with psychoanalysis. On remember that for Freud, unconscious representations can be ambivalent and contradictory. In turn, as Deleuze pointed out regarding Lacan and his interpretation of the unconscious in Freud's work, this is an "intersubjective unconscious"[10]; it is in the linking space, rather than belonging to an individual or collective entity.

It Can Be Investigated by Each of Their Expressions But Indirectly

An important feature to take into account, when approaching the tradition of studies on social imaginaries, is that these are not a directly sensible reality but rather a construction of the subject that describes them, as a result of their interpretation, construction, a starting from the expressions of the existence of these imaginary representations. In other words, social imaginaries are accessed indirectly. This statement has several implications: the definition of social imaginary studies must contemplate the diversity of forms of expression of these imaginaries. The approach designs to their studies must take into account the instituted moments, of the instituting process and of social praxis and creation social imaginaries. In the same way, the studies must be open to the appearance of new symptoms or indicators of the existence of social imaginaries, not foreseen in their initial approaches to a cultural space.

On the other hand, it has a differentiating theoretical implication from different similar approaches, since these symptoms themselves are a necessary condition to be able to affirm the existence of collective representations—collective subjectivity, beyond the convergence of similarities in responses to individual response instruments such as surveys or political and social voting so that they are done privately. One of the most significant differences of these approaches from social psychology to the studies

[10] "Thus, an intersubjective unconscious is defined that is not reduced to an individual unconscious or a collective unconscious, and concerning which one series can no longer be assigned as originating and the other as derivative (…)" (Deleuze, 2002 [1967], p. 167).

of social imaginaries from some of the ones that have been made from sociology is to suspect, to question, the existence of social imaginaries, which have been affirmed by statistical congruence in the response to surveys.

It does not mean that these statistically congruent responses should not be taken into account to be alert about the expression of symptoms of these collective imaginary representations but only the existence of expressions that account for a shared subject. In other words, collective emergencies authorize, according to this approach, affirming or suspecting at least that there are collective imaginary representations.

For the study from the perspective of the social imaginary, social emergencies are interpreted to obtain indicators of both the social imaginary and the social interactions that are both its cause and effect. In this sense, a rational, positive result of its study cannot be offered by the researcher; instead, interpretations are offered, which are new ways of enunciating its existence by the researcher. The researcher, as said before, does not establish an aseptic approach. Instead, it recognizes the effects of its presence in the scene, over the interpretation of the results, and the destiny of those interpretations.

Social psychology underwent three important movements—although not necessarily chronological—the passage from perception to construction, the second from construction to transformation and the third towards creation. The social imaginary was no exception; in fact, it was an advance in this process (Machin, 2005).

However, the idea of collective subjectivity has been controversial, precisely on political issues. There, the question was played in the tension between the existence of a national social subject and the fantasy of a national subjectivity—discussed in various ways in "Imagined Communities" or in "The anatomy of a national fantasy"—and the possibility of collective actions that transcend the individual subject, welcomed in various intellectual projects, from the Marxist tradition, or via French post-structuralism, Guattari. As part of the broad spectrum of approaches to social imaginaries and their manifestations, other investigations that account for their existence can be identified in more limited contexts such as groups or labour organizations.

The studies of collective subjectivity in groups have had several traditions, some of the closest to the notion of social imaginary can be identified with the tradition of studies of operative groups by Enrique Pichón-Riviere and studies in small groups of René Kaës. In both cases, an

attempt was made to identify expressions in the groups that account for shared collective subjectivities, which offer symptoms of their existence visible to an external observer—involved or not, in the dynamics.

Congruent with this interpretation is the notion used among others by Armando Bauleo of the institutional unconscious. It alluded to the existence of an organizational unconscious, shared by the members of a specific labour institution, which has effects on their actions, decisions, evaluations and so on, without their necessarily being aware of it; however, it has in common with the notions of shared *pichonean* subjectivity from which they start that this institutional unconscious offers expressions and symptoms of its existence to observers not yet involved in that institution.

One of the later developments that we have been able to follow to this notion refers to what happens with incorporating new members to the institution. Among other effects, it is mentioned that the subjects initially resist responding to those unconscious institutional mandates, which for them are perceived as an alien other and that establish little rational rules. However, after some time in the organization, they incorporate these representations unconsciously and function according to them like the rest of the organization members. In that sense, the most significant indicator of their incorporation of that institutional unconscious is the inability to perceive these representations. In other words, these representations, to operate in the behaviour of the subjects of the organization, must be presented as something natural and congruent in the subjects' actions, cancelling their ability to perceive them critically.

The Social Imaginary and the Limits of Representation

Probably, one of the significant epistemic overturns contained in the conceptual project of social imaginaries is associated with the rupture of the possibility of representation, both in the tradition of studies of social perception and of studies of social representations. It represents an anti-representationalist alternative (Gergen, 1985), but as a capacity to contain that what is not represented and it is not representable, that systematically returns as an effect, or imaginary emergency (Machin, 2005). This sense, which this tradition inherited from Freudian thought, in turn, updated, on the subject's side, the suggestions presented in the "Grundrisse" Marx, on the alien and external determination of the subject. For Marx, this

effect of the unrepresentable is reinforced with the appearance of money; it comes from the community, but it is anticipated, initially as a determination of the individual about himself through the relationship with others (Marx, 1857–1858, p. 137). Those two conditions, first, of the necessity of the relationship with another to its objectification and second, the possibility of being represented and, at the same time, not-all representable, by something alien, will determine the condition of a relationship with the other non-objective and external to the subject.

The recognition of the actual acts, the material products and in a certain sense the institutions, beyond their symbolic existence, as in passing, was an implicit project in Castoriadis' (1975) conception of the social imaginary.[11] He did not achieve it because he was, at the time, more engaged in a larger project, in the confrontation with functionalism as interpretation, which involved both anthropology and sociology, Marxism and psychoanalysis. It is, however, that project on whose realization it is possible to glimpse the entire breadth of existence of the imaginary and where social psychology could take advantage of his workspace.

There is an internal relationship between the instituted, the represented, the act and the unrepresentable with the social imaginary. While the instituted represents the trace of an imaginary, the represented, it's naming, the act, the present inscription process and the unrepresentable are her future. When it was affirmed that the social imaginary does not die (Machin, 2000), reference was made, not precisely to the fact that it remains inscribed—since its inscription is exactly its death—but rather that the non-inscribable always returns to disturb on the instituted, into the represented, into the speech and into the act. These disturbances must be taken into account with caution, never literally but taken into account. Most of them appear as *emergency sources of this imaginary*.

The Emergency Sources of Social Imaginaries

It is known that for individual psychology from Rorschach to Brunner, the use of techniques of indirect exploration of subjectivity has been vital for the development not only of profound theories about the functioning of the psyche but also in the development of alternative approaches to the "pathos" of the soul. Much less known, however, despite the

[11] The reader can review in this regard, Castoriadis (1975). The institution and the imaginary pp. 186–187.

"Psychopathology of daily life" or "The malaise in culture" is the use of material that, as a result of socialization, emerges to fracture the limits imposed by what is instituted on social subjectivity.[12]

The "symptoms" of social subjectivity, available to everyone, every day shout the feelings of society in our faces without us paying any ears to it. However, they would be a good piece of information for those with responsibility and institutional decision-making power: it is in their hands to keep the walls of the institution flexible enough to avoid their fracture before the push of the social imaginary.

As a hinge between classical Marxism and psychoanalysis, where the confluence was not frustrated,[13] it condensed, among others, through Castoriadis the concept of emergencies of the social imaginary, the result of the convergence of several categorical lines that preceded it.

Identification of Emergencies

The idea of elaborating a relatively autonomous methodology of the dominant positions in the research proposals constitutes a way to overcome the positivist imperialism of research, which has a theoretical (Habermas, 1990 [1982]; Munné, 1989), a methodological (Devereaux, 1969) or an academic (Lull, 2003) expression. In this regard, Jamel Lull advised, referring to cultural studies, that more important than following and wanting to catch all this theoretical movement was to try to adapt it to the conditions and needs of the context in which it was going to be investigated (Lull, 2003)

At this moment, rather than dwelling on an analysis of the essential concept of emergencies of the social imaginary, we will explore its operational capacity to generate social investigations that revive the critique of our daily lives. In the last three decades of the previous century, the most progressive social psychology incorporated as one of its objectives the

[12] In a previous study, we stopped at the relationship between the imaginary emergence and its fractures in the instituted. A summary of this research appeared in the essay "La Resistencia imaginaria" Revista Encuentro, 2000.

[13] An interesting essay on the relationship between Marxism and Psychoanalysis written by J.L. Acanda (1998) covers the historical moments of the frustration of this confluence. As an effort to complement it, from a logical and epistemological point of view, we carried out a study whose resulting essay we entitled *Cantos y desencantos sobre encuentros y desencuentros* (Machín, 2008), in which the role of a certain borderline thought between one episteme and another is analysed as is the case of C. Castoriadis.

intervention committed to reality, the result of which the critique of daily life became one of its final objectives. Then, at the end of the century, the banality and the rebirth of pragmatism—cognitivism, voluntarism and even bilogicism for psychology—were abandoning the "fashion" of transforming intervention from the social subject to replace it in the best of cases by the fashion of transformation "of" the social subject.

The study from the concept of social imaginary precisely proposes a return to the transforming role of social subjectivity from itself; from the recognition of its founding capacity, of its instituting power; and from the recognition of your desire.

As we have been discussing, the imaginary is an ephemeral record in itself. The only way to become observable is through its objectification and/or institutionalization. Yet, paradoxically, once instituted, it is no longer imaginary. This raises the problem of the sources of its recognition in an empirical investigation. Without going too far into the characterization of the methodological and operational relevance of this type of research, it is feasible to make some comments about the main imaginary emergencies that can be taken as a reference in an investigation and their relevance in the approach to a general characterization of the social imaginary and its links with social reality and its institutions.

It is also necessary to emphasize that research on the social imaginary requires constant observance of the transferential signs of the researcher with respect to the community in each of the stages. Of vital importance is its collection at the beginning of the investigation, as much of the most relevant data of the investigation on the community social imaginary will be registered in the mutual subjective reactions of those first moments; then the effects of daily friction are tempering the irregularities of the surfaces in contact, that is, the subjectivity of the researcher and that of the social subject to be investigated, as well as the individual subjects involved; and the singular richness of subjective strangeness dissolves in everyday life: the second stage of the investigation then appears. In this second moment, patient listening is required, alert both to explicit speeches and to unconscious emergencies, own and the subject to investigate. For these reasons, a pair of records must be kept, in situ and a posteriori, which allows them to be compared at the end.

Research on the social imaginary is an adventure towards the collision of one's own individual subjectivity with an alien collective and individual subjectivity. From its result, conclusions about the dynamics produced there may be systematized, which will undoubtedly be more a reflection of

that time interval than a timeless diagnostic interpretation; especially if we are honest enough and coherent with the idea already stated that the imaginary is in its becoming; and that any intervention in order to know it not only describes it but also transforms it.

The research report of the social imaginary should finally be read more than as the timeless anchor or the reading of an unfailing and teleological oracle, as a report of the result of that subjective experience. Let us stop now in the analysis of the expressive potentialities of some of the sources already used in previous research (Machin, 2004a).

The Language of the Houses

Any social research on a community has as one of its sources the house-to-house visit. This is a good space to catch the imaginary structure of an institution that is reproduced in the most archaic of systems: the home. We must go to those places, with the sensitivity of the anthropologist and of the field researcher, with the extreme sincerity of Devereaux (1969), capable of recognizing in their feelings in the personal impact of these visits an inexhaustible source of information about that "ecological niche" that speaks to us as Emilio Rodrigué[14] called it. From the *façade*, which will be seen as an independent source due to its impact on the public, to the detail of each of its corners, they are relevant. The architectural and environmental design of the rooms, their distribution, the contiguity of the rooms must be recorded. Doors or their absence are significant because they limit or facilitate access, make coexistence more private or invasive and promiscuous. The distribution of small private micro-spaces inside the home such as drawers, places in the bed, corners provides information about the personal and the collective in the houses. The presence of religious or family altars, the colour of the walls and their objects are also relevant. All this acquires meaning in the space of the collective social subjectivity of the family itself at the same time that it reproduces[15] and configures the lines of a more general collective or social imaginary.

[14] Rodrigué spoke out in favour of "[…] the possibility of anthropologically studying people in their habitat and interacting within their ecological niche. That niche is communicative. The houses speak "(Rodrigué, 2003, p. 3) (Our translation).

[15] From Durkheim to Bordieu, sociology has been able to account for the processes of social reproduction at all levels; however, the subtle mechanisms through which it is exercised change from society to society and from context to context and are also part of the reproduced.

Sociopathology of Everyday Life

If, in an attempt to get closer to the individual subject, Freud, in The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, bet on studying the irruptions of the unconscious in every day: the joke, the failed acts and the forgetfulness; for the study of social subjectivity, it is also necessary to resort to everyday expressions. Everyday social conflicts; the phrases in the transport, in the market and in the street; and informal conversations—all these are sources of expression of the social imaginary yet to be instituted or of the reimagining of the instituted.

In various Latin American contexts where we have carried out these investigations, it has been possible to use the spontaneity of its inhabitants. The substantial production of expressions in which in its daily life it expresses, not only the superficial and ephemeral, the banal, but also each of its deepest concerns, ideas, dreams, theories and desires, is an inexhaustible source of information to know each context and how it is inhabited.

The set of daily expressions as a symptom of the existence of the social imaginary is a vital source of information collection for any social research that boasts of being unbiased, systematic and committed to the truth and transformation according to the designs of the social subject's own desire.

Children's Games

Regardless of the differences between theoretical or disciplinary formations, the special anthropological significance that the game has in the singularization of the human being is recognized and accepted at different levels, both from the phylogenetic point of view (Huizinga, 1988 [1938]) and in the subjective ontogenetic constitution of man, due to the role it fulfils in the preparation of the "human cub" for its incorporation into the social institution to which it belongs (Vigotsky, 1987).

For Vigotsky, the game fulfils a primordial function in the child's socialization and the acquisition of social functions that he will later have to carry out as an adult. For this analysis, he incorporates Marx's idea that social objects contain within themselves a portion of human history; and he reveals the complex psychological mechanisms through which the child, assisted by the adult, appropriates the culture of humanity, especially the society with which he is directly related.

Children's games as an expression of social, cultural, community and even political information, and the more general institutional structures are a good source from which the imaginary springs. There is a long tradition in use, by psychoanalysis and psychology, of children's games both as a method of collecting information and/or as a means of intervention, not so much so in sociocultural studies. Social studies knew how to draw from psychoanalysis in its practice and its theory. Why not do it also concerning such productive techniques as observing children's play.

Children's play contains a strong imaginary charge and not just a symbolic or pre-functional expression. In this regard, W. Winnicott said that this is why he studied the small child, whose relationship with things was illusory—similar to that established by the arts of religion (Winnicott, 1971). It is in this sense that it is an almost transparent source of reading the imaginary.

Graffiti, Wall Painting and Calligraphy: The Imaginary Transmission of Information Through the Line

In societies, some information transmission runs parallel to the symbolic transmission and is relatively independent of it: the imaginary transmission of information. This transmission of information has always existed; it even predates its symbolic form. The pictographs, the petroglyphs, were not only pre-symbolic forms but imaginary forms of exchange of ideas, forms and structures that were not real and also not yet symbolic. This space would then only be reserved for the non-symbolizable.

In ancient Egyptian writing, there were glyphs that embodied in themselves the two forms of information containment. The glyphs were imaginary—symbolic; this is its difficulty in being deciphered. Only then did sign and image separate, and the word came to be interpreted almost exclusively in its symbolic dimension. Anyway, calligraphy remained as an imaginary subversion to the order of the written word. In everything that we write, by hand, on a paper, we place not only signs, with the meaning and meaning that we intend—or that escape our conscious intention but are still symbolically decipherable, by an interpretive reading—but we also record a whole generation, a family brand, a whole teaching tradition, a

whole era, a country, a culture, an identity[16] and a social imaginary. If we make this brand a public exercise, then we are taking a leap out of the generational transmission; we are creating a space not only for imaginary containment but also for the generation of imaginary. In this sense, graffiti continues to be a key to understanding, unveiling and building the social imaginary. The line is a container of the imaginary, as is the word of meanings; if it is shared, it is also a transcendent imaginary creation.

Interesting antecedents, however, are found via the connections between cultural and political studies of graffiti and mural painting.

Among the publication of Julien Besancon (1970) work, The walls have the floor, and the Committee for the Defense of Chilean Culture (Comité de Defensa de la Cultura Chilena, 1990) in Berlin published Mur alismo = Wandmalerei = Peinture Murale = Mural Painting = Pittura Murale Art in Chilean popular culture, twenty years passed. Just three years after Besancon's book, the Chilean people knew of a sad political reality that left the walls as one of the few forms of expression, almost a screaming. Unfortunately, we social researchers have added little to the voices that those eloquent walls cried out.[17]

Towards the Imaginary Formalization and Institutionalization, However, the Murals Are Moving

Keys for a reading of the social imaginary of the peoples, the murals are an expression of the instituting moment of the image and generators of the social imaginary. Without dwelling too much on this expression of the community imaginary, already studied previously by us, it is necessary to point out some keys: in a study on the social imaginary of a community, all graphic expressions that contain at least two of the following

[16] Various researches on the subject can be found. In our case, at the beginning of 2000, we directed a degree thesis of Sociocultural Studies entitled "Studies on calligraphy and identity", which tried to account for this complex process of identity construction through personal calligraphy and its relationship with the calligraphy of parents, guardians and teachers.

[17] While the project of this book was beginning in 2018, Chile revived its long tradition of expression in the walls as one of the ways of existing what was called the social outbreak of October of that year. We collected a very brief and fragmentary part of that moment in a visual work and some ideas. Still, this work should be complemented by a systematization of all the recorded images from that recent period.

characteristics should be studied: occupy public spaces, be two-dimensional and in a visible format, not be ephemeral. This combination of qualities will ensure that your exchange with the community objectively represents the possibility of being both containers and generators of social imaginary. Some of these expressions have already been studied by us at different times and contexts. Among them, the research projects on murals, the pictographs of the Indo-Cubans, graffiti or tattoos stand out, the first results of which constitute premises for adjusting their use as sources in this research.

Facades vs Interiors

The facades of houses, despite the relative rigidity[18] of regulations on architecture and urban planning, are on the other hand a rich expression of aesthetic ideals, but also social, economic and political, ecological and so on of a community; they are its subjective expression displayed in and towards the environment. Observing the evolution of the architectural design of the houses, we can contrast, against the grain of the regulations instituted, an expression of values, ideals, desires, frustrations and social conflicts. If we investigate the history of the design of the architectural idea of a house, we will find family histories, generational differences more or less well settled, hierarchical power structures that go beyond economic wealth or the spatial and design limitations pre-established by regulation.[19] It is important to understand a community to see its daily customs as its architectural expressions and the use and exploitation of the physical space in which it is located. Although many times this transcends the possibilities of the community itself, the use that it makes of its public and private spaces within the framework of what is instituted or outside of them is an inexhaustible source of information about the spatial imaginary of that community.

[18] The regulations on architecture and urban planning have always followed imaginary tendencies, and not every time they have constituted the just institutionalization of the social imaginary of an era, associated above all with variables of power, political and economic in the first, but later also the power that knowledge grants—or its absence—on these issues and the struggle of the most diverse social actors.

[19] In any case, these regulations are also an expression of imaginary variables determined, such as the place that architectural design occupies in the hierarchy of those who elaborate and interpret these regulations and their value judgments regarding the role and place of architectural design in society.

On the other hand, the interiors of the houses, much more intimate and private, are a living image of their inhabitants, as is how we represent ourselves. Without being too exaggerated, it can be said that the facades are to the face and the way of dressing of the people, like the interiors to the skin of the rest of their body and their own personal image. Any researcher who enters a house after the imaginary trace must be subtle and careful both in the appropriation of this rich information and in the use that he makes of it. With it, its tenants give us part of their privacy. There the ethical guarantee on its use must be stamped on our part. However, the facades are the public bet of the homes; it is the shared image, the mask designed for exchange, the way we would like to be identified. These are created to be shared: however, due to their public cost, they must be discussed by consensus rather than by rigid regulations instituted by the subjects of the public space that they cut.

The Tattoo, the Piercing and the Body Art

Sometimes it is not enough to leave an external mark, external to ourselves: it is necessary to do so on ourselves as well. It is not necessary to go to the psychopathology of autistics or children with severe psychological disorders. At certain moments in the evolution of any child, we will discover both the pleasure of painting the walls, the things and themselves, after they discover the enjoyment of the line. Finally, older, many children in our culture enjoy drawing a clock or a doll on their finger. There is in this expression something of play, of playful enjoyment, of aesthetic pleasure and of bodily enjoyment. Also, there is an attempt at imaginary differentiation where the symbolic difference fails. As early as 1929, Ivor Armstrong Richards established relationships between social conditioning and aesthetic reactions, which was equally valid regardless of cultural level. The reaction to aesthetic expression is more the result of a shared imagination than of a rational formation. Around that same date, Vigotsky, the brilliant Russian psychologist, was writing a treatise on art and psychology in which he tried to unravel the keys to aesthetic production and reception. However, in all of his work, there are elements to understand social and individual subjectivity links with art. Among his most surprising conclusions was that the symbolic expression of art was the result of the symbolic synthesis of a rich and even vaster inner imaginary world (Vigotsky, 1966 [1926]), formed in turn in the conditions of the complex social situation of the development of each stage of each historical moment of the

subject (Vigotsky, 1987). Michael Foucault incorporates, for his part, the idea that bodily expression is also the result of resistance to repression, to symbolic exclusion. Perhaps this is why Habermas believes that he is reading in Foucault a vindication of corporal expression very similar to that made by Bataille. According to him, Foucault sees the body as "[…] resistance can extract its motivation, if not its justification, only from the signals of the body language, from that nonverbalizable language of the body on which pain has been inflicted, which refuses to be sublated into discourse" (Habermas, 1998 [1985], p. 285–286). The aesthetics of the body runs as a vindication of the asymmetry generated by all forms of power.[20] Perhaps because "the asymmetry (replet with of normative content) that Foucault sees embedded in power complexes does not hold primarily between powerfull wills and coerced subjugation, but between processes of power and the bodies that are crushed within them. It is always the body that is maltreated in torture and made into a showpiece of sovereing revenge" (Habermas, 1998 [1985], p. 285). Even when the sovereign is the subject himself, he wishes to only express his sovereignty over his own body. "[…] it is always the body [Habermas continues saying about Foucault], that is taken hold of in drill resolved into a field of mechanical forces and manipulated; the one that is objectified and monitored by the human sciences, even as it is stimulated in its desire and stripped naked" (Habermas, 1994 [1985], p. 285). That relative autonomy of the body was, not without a certain scandal, exhibited by the greats of Cuban literature: Lezama and his homosexuality,[21] Carpentier and his phonetics, Guillén and his Cubanness[22] and Sarduy and the peculiar poetics of his body[23]; and it is exhibited now by the most dissimilar sexual tendencies and corporal expression.

[20] "Power also preserves in Foucault's hands a literally aesthetic reference to the perception of the body, to the painful experience of the abused and punished body" (Habermas, 1994 [1985], p. 340).

[21] Not only private but his controversial gaze for the time that he submitted to public space through *Paradiso*, especially his controversial Chapter VIII.

[22] Understood as vulgarity by those who insist on ignoring it, in criticism, for example, of his "Poem of Purity", one of his most controversial poems, is probably because it is precisely an expression of the Cuban sexual, social imaginary. Thus, the controversy ranges from those who question his authorship, through those who question the quality of Nicolás Guillén by having dared to write that, to those who try to turn it into a great poem, because Guillén is a great poet: what he hides is the horror of unveiling what is repressed in the social imaginary.

[23] The reader can review the essay by M. Mateo (1999) "Sarduy y la poética del cuerpo" In *Crítica*, 1999.

The Carnival

Carnival represents for the collective conscience a space for the liberation of this imaginary, not only because of the wide range of symbolization spaces that it offers but because in itself it represents the liberation from the repressions that culture establishes through what is instituted. Even when not all the tendencies of the social imaginary manage to establish themselves in the carnival, due to the ambivalence of the imaginary itself, impossible to be found in the plane of the instituted and its endless wealth incapable of being trapped by the limits of the symbolic, it finds itself in it a space of greater freedom. Even though not all the expressions of the social imaginary find a space in the real manifestation of their existence, the garland of voices that is the carnival offers a greater wealth of symptoms to meet him there.

Ethics of the Investigation of the Social Imaginary

Before ending with this list of emergency sources of the social imaginary, it is necessary to make an ethical statement. No social inquiry is aseptic and neutral. Asking ourselves about our social image and not only about our model is more than characterizing or describing it; it is in itself a way of transforming it. It is here where a type of investigation of this court becomes delicate, where it is required, as the poet said, to walk with cat's feet. Any intervention for investigative purposes in a community undoubtedly causes irreversible movements, and not always predictable in it, but it always undoubtedly opens a gap in the struggle of community desire beyond the designs of the instituted. The claim of asepticism or neutrality, in reality, hides more or less conscious determinations and desires of the researcher, but which undoubtedly have their influence on the object to be investigated; to the extent that these are not made explicit, their influence is diluted in the research results. That is why we believe that it also has an essential role in an investigation on the social imaginary, the constant questioning of the researcher about his desire or, if you like, the evolution of his moods, feelings, attitudes and values, with respect to the research object, which is itself a subject, with certain levels of action, reaction, autonomy and intentionality, and whose effects on the researcher are also variable.

Forward on the Investigation on the Social Imaginary

At this time, several investigations are coordinated from the perspective of the social imaginary. These should contribute to consolidating the practical output of the investigations of social subjectivity that are a debt to settle with the tradition of Marxist thought. However, the academic perspective will never replace the role of social subjectivity in the struggle for hegemony, to which Gramsci (1975) opportunely gave an active role to the intellectual of the social sciences.

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CHAPTER 7

Re-entangling Childhoods: Post-essentialist Approaches to Children's Everyday Lives

Sebastian Rojas-Navarro and Patricio Rojas

Why Do We Need to Think About Childhood All Over Again?

In his first editorial as new editor of Childhood—a flagship journal for academics and scholars interested in childhood studies—Spyros Spyrou (2017) strongly argued for the necessity to reconsider some key notions and categories that, for a long time, have been central for our current understanding of children and childhood. Mainly, he aimed at "decentering" childhood by incorporating, in a braver fashion, insights from emerging fields and theories that have been sensitive to the transformations carried on by the "ontological turn" in social sciences. This, as the need to "engage with real-life emerging concerns which escape the narrow confines of a 'child-centered' field of study" has become increasingly evident (Spyrou, p. 433).

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The concerns and propositions made by Spyrou are not unknown for the field of psychosocial studies and social psychology. Attempts have been made by key scholars on this field to search for inspiration in other areas of expertise (Brown & Stenner, 2009; O'Doherty et al., 2019; Nichterlein 2021; Stenner, 2017), inasmuch they have perceived the urgent need to reconfigure these field's methods and subjects of study. In the midst of a social world that is constantly changing, it becomes imperative to create renewed approaches, able to grasp the complexities of our current modes of existence, where the borders between the social, the natural, and the technological are becoming increasingly blurred (Prout, 2005). After all, as Stenner (2014, p. 206) has argued, "questions of psychology can be very poorly posed when abstracted from their cultural, societal and historical settings, and (…) these settings are poorly understood in abstraction from the living, experiencing human beings whose actions make their reproduction and transformation possible."

Although these new foundations for psychology and psychosocial studies have managed to inspire interesting alternatives to think about traditional topics in psychology (Brown, 2018; Brown & Reavey, 2015; Brown & Stenner, 2009; Cromby, 2015; Rojas, 2017; Tucker, 2012), its impact in reimagining childhood still requires further developing. Despite attempts made to reframe childhood (Lee & Motzkau, 2012; Rojas Navarro, 2018), "childhood" and "children" continue to be categories strongly embedded in modernist ideas about the human subject, which end up acting as shortcomings that prevent the development of a new theoretically and empirically informed imagination about childhood.

This chapter advances in the wake of the latter. To fully grasp the complexities and multiplicities (Law & Mol, 2002) of current children's lives, we resign traditional conceptualizations of childhood that have pervaded child and social psychology during most of the twentieth century, offering an alternative port of departure. Inspired by current theoretical debates in social sciences and the humanities, and particularly on debates about posthumanism, the ontological turn, and the urgencies of the Anthropocene, we argue for the need to reconceptualize childhood in terms of entanglements, fragile assemblages produced in encounters that are open-ended and dependent on the heterogeneity of human and nonhuman agents (Prout, 2019; Savransky, 2016).

Such a post-essentialist approach demands us to be aware of the fundamental relationality of childhood. It also requests researchers to be

attentive to the constant component of novelty in which children's lives are enacted in different locations, times, and spaces.

Childhood as a Modern Category: Origin, Controversies, and Limits of a Worn-Out Concept

Shifting our epistemic approaches to encompass and explore the complex and rich nature of children's lives seems to be a pending matter for social psychology. While historically researchers and scholars in this field have put their attention on some key psychosocial processes embodied by children such as learning, the development of conduct, and moral judgment, it is also true that they have has shown little to no interest in developing explorations aimed at interrogating the very foundations upon which these theories about children are being constructed. To a significant extent, social psychology's considerations about children still rely upon the tacit acceptance of a particular representation of children, an image deeply rooted in humanistic accounts originated by the historical ties of the psychological sciences with modern ideals of rationality and progress. And while these assumptions have been contested and discussed during the last decades in other fields of social theory, attempting to produce theories and concepts that can better inform the shifting and hybrid nature of our time and ourselves, the psychological sciences have proved to be resistant to these efforts. Therefore, this chapter aims at bridging some of these gaps by crafting a psychosocial theory of childhood that can both interrogate the shortcomings of psychological accounts embedded in developmental psychology and advance towards a conceptual redefinition of childhood that illuminates new aspects of their psychosocial makeup, understood as complex, contingent, local, and situated, as part of a constant flux of encounters with other human and nonhuman beings.

Such consideration of childhood is not theoretically new for social sciences nor the humanities nor are we the first in attempting to bring together this conceptual framework with aspects of childhood and children's lives. Yet, as we discuss in this chapter, the novelty of our effort lies in "thinking with" those who originally gave birth to ideas and concepts that now prove to be vital when reflecting upon the current state of affairs our world is experiencing (Stengers, 2011). We believe this to be an exercise in knitting together, and, while drawing inspiration from them, we also aim at simultaneously speculating together about the possible futures

this allows for the psychological sciences and, particularly, social psychology. When referring to possible futures, we agree with what has been discussed by some scholars (Savransky et al., 2017) who have argued that imaginations of the future do not only anticipate what is still to come, they also influence how we understand current affairs (Massumi, 2002). They invoke and anticipate the future as they encourage the development of mechanisms for producing what is yet to come (Barad, 2010; Fisher, 2012, 2014). As such, we claim that different futures for childhood are in need to be imagined and conceptualized so they can shed light on the current and still-to-come contexts and problems that are taking shape.

By producing a renewed framework of analysis for understanding childhood and children's everyday common worlds, we aim to think not only about particular aspects of children's lives but also about childhood as a biosocial and cultural phenomenon that is entangled and therefore emergent to specific times, locations, and places. To do so, we propose to start from the developmental considerations of childhood which are still lingering in most accounts provided by social psychology about different facets of children's development, to later explore and propose alternatives to such considerations to provide a different standpoint to theirs, with the limitations and potentialities that this might entail.

In light of the abovementioned, our point of departure requires us to acknowledge a key idea that has been widely accepted by the social sciences but, curiously, has been a matter of heated debate for the psychological sciences: children are not a given fact of nature. As simple as this idea may seem, psychological theories about childhood and children seem to have a hard time coming to terms with this fact since psychology has proven to be a discipline highly unaware of its own ethical, political, and social compromises. As David Lancy (2015) mentions, the production of psychological facts and truths is a process that exhibits deep culture-bounded flaws. Psychology hurts from a tendency to proclaim the universality of its discoveries, ignoring the conditions of possibility required for such truths to be enunciated. In that sense, developmental psychology has done no better. This has had a profound impact on what we think about children. After all, many of what we currently consider as well-established truths about children and childhood rely on knowledge produced by this field of expertise.

This problem has been tackled by researchers and scholars mainly under the argument that developmental psychology has a significant sampling bias (Nielsen et al., 2017). Most of our more well-known facts and ideas

about children and their development, about how we are supposed to connect and engage with them, about their upbringing, about their relationship with the social worlds, and about how they produce their experiences have "no foundation for broad generalization" (p. 36). It is all built upon what Joseph Henrich, Steven Heine, and Ara Norenzayan (2010) have called "the weirdest people in the world." There is, of course, a deep implication in this denomination. WEIRD is an acronym used by Heinrich and his colleagues to refer to specific societies which are the same that gave birth to developmental psychology and, therefore, to our current understanding of children. The problem is that WEIRD societies (WEIRD meaning Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) are extremely unrepresentative of the multiple forms in which individual and social life unfolds daily.

Following the idea shared by the abovementioned scholars and researchers, we agree with accounts arguing that the population of the world is quite different from the American undergraduates composing "the bulk of the database in the experimental branches of psychology" (p. 61). Drawing on this revelation we claim that, to a significant extent, truths and facts shared by developmental psychology are to be carefully weighed as they push forward a dangerous illusion, that of the "normal child." Normality and universality are, indeed, risky ideas when it comes to exploring childhood and children, as these ideas attempt to neutralize the incredibly heterogeneous forms that children have embodied and in which they have been conceptualized in different times and spaces.

So, if the current image of childhood and children are nothing more than an overstretch of a white, bourgeois, modern, and educated idea of children, aimed at fulfilling colonialist ideas of normalcy and performance, how and why did it manage to pervade other cultures and societies and came to occupy this central place in our everyday lives? And why do we need to overthrow it to produce new visions of childhood, ones that allow us to better explore and understand the actual lives they experience in a constantly changing world? How can we develop a new form of psychosocial studies of childhood that can encompass their experiences and processes of (co)affectation with the world?

To respond to these questions, we ought to start from the beginning, by acknowledging that childhood and children are moving concepts and therefore the fact that how we think about childhood and act concerning children is historically and culturally shaped. As it has been registered by historians of childhood (Ariès, 1962; Cunningham, 2006; Shorter, 1976),

the current form that these trends have adopted in European societies seems to have a distinguishable starting point: the advent of the modern age. But, although there is a common agreement between experts and scholars that a set of specific attitudes towards childhood and children emerged and consolidated around that time, controversies around this topic are still numerous. After all, if indeed our contemporary version of childhood started being contoured around the modern age, this does not mean that other visions of childhood and other ideas about children could not be presented before that.

According to Ariès (1962) and De Mausse (1974), attitudes towards children have largely varied across time. Ariès claims that during the Middle Ages childhood was not a recognizable stage of human life. Adults did not display a particular set of emotions or actions towards what we now think about as children, as they were considered adults from the moment that they could perform some basic tasks, rendering it pointless to think about them as a different stage of human life. For De Mausse, relationships between adults and children before modern times were signed by actions of cruelty and physical and psychological abuse. If there was one common element articulating most interactions between adults and children, it was punishment. Only with time society learned to cope and deal with children differently, slowly transitioning to a relationship marked by signs of care and affection.

These ideas contrast with what has been stated by other historians such as Linda Pollock (1983). Based on her exhaustive research of parent-children relationships and rearing practices during most of the last 500 years, she comes to conclude that despite some minor variations in time, these relationships have not been as dire as mentioned by Ariès and De Mausse. Contrarily, they seem to be mostly stable. Parent-child interactions across time appear to follow key and recurrent concerns and have mostly been imbued with feelings of fondness and care. Pollock concludes her detailed exposition of the history of childhood, arguing that, when it comes to their children, there seems to be a lingering attitude of parental preoccupation for their well-being.

Aligned with Pollock's view, we can state that childhood is not an invention of the modern age, yet it provides a new form of specific affective commitment that positions children as worthy of economic and emotional investment. Childhood cannot be reduced to a modern concept. Rather, the dynamic nature of the concept reveals how its contouring relies on its interactions with other significant variables such as varying

concepts of adulthood, considerations about human development, governmental and economic interests, and ideas about family and parenting. As Lerer (2008) has conclusively revealed, both children and attempts to understand, educate, and entertain them have been a constant during history. However, how these actions are expected to take place, how much effort adults are willing to invest in the process, and what results are expected to be obtained have changed through time.

So, what was it about the modern age that secured the possibility for a different unfolding of childhood and a different expectation about children? Indeed, the influence of leading figures including moralists and educators, such as Jean Jacques Rousseau, played an important role in this process. But their attention was mobilized to children's lives as part of a more global trend, one that was crowned with the implementation of educational services attempting to include all children as part of governmental interests in children, considered by modern governments as an investment, a way of dealing with public demands, and a form of keeping societal fragmentation at bay (Donzelot, 1980). More specifically, modern states targeted children as part of a bigger project, one that was concerned with the "future of the nation," and saw children's moral, mental, and physical health as a long-term investment that could secure the greatness of the nation-state (Mayall, 2013). Studying children, as Burman (2007) has mentioned, were also part of the nineteenth-century ethos since unraveling the mysteries of the children's body and mind held the promise for allowing a better understanding of the origins and characteristics of the adult mind, all of which was happening amidst a society deeply intrigued by new discoveries of genetic endowment and the influence of environmental factors.

This marked the beginning of the first scientifically informed efforts to study the child, taking the form of societies orientated at exploring the developmental stages through which the child—a prehistoric, still unfinished version of the adult—must traverse to achieve adulthood and all that comes attached to such ideal: the achieving of rationality, maturity, and stability. Inspired by the figure of Charles Darwin and his work upon the evolutionary nature of children development (1971), these so-called child-study societies started to "observe, weigh, and measure children—procedures that become more feasible as all children became sited in educational institutions" (Mayall, 2013, p. 3). This process, oriented to grant an initial scientific appraisal of the child, took place as part of a series of other profound transformations taking place during the early stages of

modernity. As Prout (2005) argues, contemporary childhood came into existence thanks to, and in relation to, political, economic, social, cultural, and technological changes. These interlocking and dynamic transformations spurred scientific knowledge as the golden standard to value knowledge and to explore reality and positioned the child as a natural phenomenon that could and should be approached by the means provided by the scientific gaze.

Following the increased interest in providing a scientific account of children's development and enthralled by the promises to unravel the mysteries behind what drove children's differences and similarities, child-led study movements gave way to the initial formulations of developmental psychology. As mentioned, for this to happen, children had to endure constant scientific examination, which could not have happened without compulsory education and the withdrawal of children from the labor force. The separation of children from adults in material and symbolic terms was indeed a key milestone for this process to succeed, and, by the end of the nineteenth century, childhood was depicted as a different, identifiable stage of human development. Children were characterized as irrational, ignorant, vulnerable, innocent, incompetent, lacking social and moral attributes, and, in general terms, in need of an adult that could guide their developmental process into adulthood via discipline and protection. Simultaneously, children were removed from the public sphere, as creatures of fragile nature that could only thrive in protected spaces such as those provided by families and schools, the modern social institutions meant to contain them and nourish them (Prout, 2005).

Research in child development was mainly spurred by two disciplines: pediatrics and developmental psychology. Broadly speaking, Woodhead (2009) points out that this new research area centers its efforts on three major issues, following a precious idea for modern western societies: that of development, understood as the passage from simplicity to complexity, from dependency to autonomy, implied in the act of growing both in our physical and psychological aspects. The first of these research interests correspond to the search and description of what he refers to as "developmental milestones." By this, he hints at the works of experimental psychologists such as Arnold Gesell, who developed "normative summaries" expected in the normal development for different age groups according to data gathered in experimental situations. As Woodhead notes, what intrigued Gesell were the commonalities, the shared patterns of behavior, cognition, and emotion that most children seem to share, which could

hold the key to understanding the blueprints followed in human development.

The second priority for researchers interested in developmental processes was to explain these common patterns. What drives human development had been a question for philosophers for centuries, prior to the emergence of developmental research. However, the newly implemented scientific culture of modernity provided a new epistemic culture in which this question needed to find an answer (Knorr Cetina, 1999).

Finally, the third point of importance was to weigh the role of contextual factors in the shaping of individual differences between children. Growing interest was given in recognizing what could predict deviations from standard development, either to achieve the outstanding or to prevent maladjustment. For critical theorists such as Nikolas Rose (1999), this was not a descriptive effort, but quite the opposite. The scientific gaze that descends upon children, embodied in the form of the psychological sciences, was used to explore and recognize developmental differences to produce distinctive forms of social regulation, to classify individuals according to their performance, and to overlook their progress and deviations through time. As Rose (1998) narrates, psychological sciences managed to provide these answers with the scientific rigor expected out of a scientific endeavor, something that previous attempts such as the ones led by child-study movements could not achieve.

As the psychological science, and particularly developmental psychology, offers the expected answers to the abovementioned questions, both in content and form, it did not take long for it to become the gold standard for thinking and working with children. As Woodhead (2009) mentions, developmental theories and research methods grew to encompass virtually all aspects of childhood studies. The modern child shaped by psychological sciences was one whose development became predictable and manipulable. Thanks to the qualities of the data produced and collected in schools and clinics under laboratory-like conditions, temporality and growth became organizing principles for thinking about development, which came hand in hand with ideas of comparison and normalization. Posture, locomotion, vocabulary, habits, initiative, independence, play, and other features became material for evaluation and diagnosis. As Rose (1998) mentions, “these developmental scales were not simply a means of assessment. They provided a new way of thinking about childhood and a new way of seeing children, one that was rapidly spread to teachers, health workers, and parents through the scientific and popular

literature. Childhood had been rendered thinkable by being made visualizable, inscribable, and assessable" (p. 111).

The abovementioned dynamics ended up producing an interesting result. As the work of historians such as Viviana Zelizer (1985) reveals, children were slowly but steadily removed from active contributions to labor and public life sometime around the beginning of the twentieth century. In return, new spaces and locations were associated with them, where they could be kept safe but also intervened if needed. They became "priceless" for parents and families, who were now willing to invest in them economically and emotionally for their future significance. Western societies increasingly became "neontocratic societies" (Lancy, 2015). But the importance of babies and children was not necessarily linked to what they were, but what they could grow to be. And since the psychological sciences seemed to be the most skillful discipline to provide answers to questions about what to expect from children and how to interact with them, their popularity and public influence gained salience during most of the past century.

Contesting Developmental Psychology: The Role of the New Social Studies of Childhood

By the late 1980s, researchers and scholars interested in children's lives commenced raising questions and critically pointing out the marginal role provided by social sciences to childhood in social theory. To most sociological and anthropological accounts, children were marginal, passive individuals, shaped by external forces, whose value lied in what they could become once they reached adulthood. This conceptualization of childhood had been circulating in social theory for most of the twentieth century, and, as Mayall (2002) notes, there seemed to be little to no interest in changing it. Until the 1990s, children were not a relevant topic of research, and only a few initiatives launched during that time aimed at providing a different kind of knowledge about children. However, this general neglect towards the study of children would change soon enough with the emergence of a new paradigm: the New Social Studies of Childhood.

The idea that a new form of knowledge about children and childhood was necessary was driven by many critiques of traditional theories used in sociology, anthropology, and psychology. Mainly, there was an increasing

unrest related to the lack of cultural, social, and historical context of the theorization about children being provided by developmental psychologists, which lead to critics from within the field of the psychological sciences which, in other strands and pushed by the emergence of critical psychology, started to become more reflective of the cultural, political, and social underpinnings of their foundations (Burman, 2007). In addition to this, sociological accounts of childhood began being interrogated for their reductionist use of socialization theories, which positioned the child as an incomplete version of a human being. For these accounts the child is an individual in the making, oriented at becoming something instead of being considered as already being a subject. While social theories considered adults as a coherent unity, children were nothing more than a heterogeneity of attributes still trying to find their way into coherence and consistency (Uprichard, 2008).

These critiques were encompassed and joined by the production of an alternative framework for thinking about children and their role in the social world. As Tisdall and Punch (2012) argue, rather than focusing on the universal norms provided by the influential science of developmental psychology, researchers and scholars coming from different disciplines pushed for considering childhood as a social construction and for children to be conceptualized as agentic beings that deserved to be studied for their own merit—and not because they will eventually inhabit that adult world so precious for social theory. The New Social Studies of Childhood provided a viable option to think about childhood from an alternate standpoint, emphasizing that the life-worlds that children inhabit were valuable and worthy of attention and that the "present" or "being" of the child was just as important as his or her "becoming," which is where traditional approaches had placed their attention (James et al., 1998).

But the New Social Studies of Childhood also put into question other traditional ideas held by psychology (Erikson, 1982; Kohlberg, 1984) and sociology (Parsons & Bales, 1956). They interrogated why social theories took for granted the idea that adults were competent, rational, mature, and moral, while children were supposed to embody the opposite values, constituting just a state of preparation for "real life," that is, for adult life. This was something of particular interest since, influenced by traditional approaches, adults had kept children away from public life and social life as children were not considered ready to face the world outside the family and the school since they had not become fully human yet. Thus, this alternative standpoint advances some intriguing and adventurous

questions: What would happen if we stopped considering adulthood as the final point of individual human development and if we stop thinking about childhood merely as stage orientated to fulfilling the needs and correcting deviations in order to become a successful adult? And finally, what kind of theoretical and methodological development do we need to help build these accounts?

To answer this, the new paradigm had to address these questions by distancing itself from three major topics pervading traditional accounts of childhood: naturalness, universality, and rationality (Prout & James, 1990a, 1990b). In their own words, "these [concepts] have structured a mode of thought which stretches far beyond the disciplinary borders of psychology, influencing not only sociological approaches to child study but the socio-political context of childhood itself." Sadly, in this process, the idea of development had intimately linked "biological facts of immaturity, such as dependence, to the social aspects of childhood" (p. 10). As social theory needed to leave behind reductionist psychological explanations of the sociality of children, those crafting the New Social Studies of Childhood urged other scholars and researchers to leave behind theories that gave little to no significance to children's social lives. After all, one of the key arguments signaled by this paradigm was that children's social relationships and cultures are indeed worthy of study in their own right (Jenks, 2005).

Alan Prout and Allison James (1990a, b), two of the founding figures of this paradigm, have summarized the key features of the New Social Studies of Childhood, producing a general outline of this research program. Overall, their indications navigate around three central ideas. First, the emphasis on the social construction of childhood, in opposition to naturalistic or a-historical accounts. Childhood is neither natural nor universal. While biological immaturity is a given fact, how and what we socially and culturally do with that fact constitutes the fabric upon which notions of childhood are built, varying across time in their form and societal role. In addition, childhood must be considered as a variable for social analysis which cannot be cut off from other variables such as gender or class. In that sense, there is not such a thing as one childhood but many, all of which are important and should be studied not because of an interest in the adults they may become but because their social worlds and relationships are important in themselves. The second proposition that drifts away from traditional accounts has to do with children's agency. For this paradigm, children are active in the construction of their social lives and in

engaging with the lives of others. This idea opposes traditional accounts that regarded children as an empty vessel or a blank slate. Finally, the laboratory is displaced as the righteous place where truths about children should be searched for and is replaced by the playground, the school, the park, and other places where children unfold their everyday lives. In that sense, surveys or experimental data are discouraged in favor of methods more suited to following children through their everyday lives.

In the wake of these ideas, a wide array of scholars, researchers, and activists started emphasizing the importance of children as social actors, their agency, their role as an active part of the social structure, among other things (Clark, 2013). Initially framed as a way of criticizing traditional approaches to children and childhood because of their dogmatism and their political implications, those participating in this new paradigm enjoyed a decade of profuse scholarly production, gaining traction as a valid alternative standpoint to unveil other aspects of childhood. However, these principles constantly risked becoming "mantras," ideas that were repeated time after time without any real critical questioning and without allowing further explorations that could drift away from these foundations (Tisdall & Punch, 2012). In a sense, there is a feeling that this paradigm grew complacent and uncritical, turning into an endless repetition of increasingly worn-out ideas (Horton et al., 2008), such as it has happened with the notion of agency as discussed by scholars questioning to what extent and under what circumstances is children's agency truly incorporated in these analyses (Bordonaro, 2012). But it is not only the theoretical repetition that has been critically examined. Also, the participatory methods implemented by this paradigm had begun to exhibit their shortcomings, being unable to deliver all that was once promised (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008).

In their illuminating article written almost two decades after the emergence of the New Social Studies of Childhood, Kay Tisdall and Samantha Punch (2012) analyze to what extent this paradigm managed to consolidate itself and stay true to what it proclaimed to deliver. Following the key topics proposed in the seminal book edited by Prout and James (1990a, 1990b), Tisdall and Punch examine if these issues have not only been accepted and implemented in the field of childhood studies but also their ability to pierce through folk understandings of childhood and children in minority and majority worlds. Their overall analysis reflects two main things. On the one hand, some of the most significant viewpoints of this framework proved to be useful, advancing knowledge about key issues

such as children's participation in social life and informing policymaking. On the other hand, they urge for more critical insights and re-examination of a series of pitfalls and shortcomings arising from this paradigm. Mainly, they raise caution against the fascination with children's agency as this has blinded academics and scholars from questioning the conditions in which agency can be granted. To them, focusing on children's perspectives, agency, or participation is not enough. It has become increasingly important to attend to the complexities, tensions, ambiguities, and ambivalences linked to these actions. Even more, the fascination with the agency of children has obscured the fact that majority and minority worlds present very different conditions for children's life to unfold, for their agency to be expressed, and for their rights to be implemented.

Yet, there is one critique that holds scholarly and practical significance and that we feel has not been addressed by scholars working from this paradigm and that has led significant figures in childhood studies, such as Alan Prout (2019) himself, to argue for the need to move past this analytical standpoint. Or, at least, to move out of some particularly significant shortcoming deeply embedded in the New Social Studies of Childhood: the disproportional significance given to social and cultural determinism over the material aspects of children's lives. In many ways, the overemphasis given to social and cultural determinants comes as a response to the biological determinism highlighted by traditional accounts such as those provided by developmental psychology and some sociological theories. This displacement towards society and culture has somehow obscured the material and biological aspects of childhood, trying to center attention on how social and cultural forces shape different forms of childhood. But centering on one or the other still leaves a significant part of children's lives out of the picture. Alan Prout (2005) summarizes this by arguing that the reduction to a single biological or social principle keeps nature and culture as separate realms, as incommensurable forms of existence, which has prevented us from fully understanding the combined, hybrid composition of human lives.

But it is not only that the previously mentioned considerations of childhood should be re-examined because of eventual shortcomings in how they frame and think about children. It is also that the social and material worlds in which we inhabit has undoubtedly changed, and leaving out its material aspects seems naïve, something that we cannot afford when thinking about actual childhoods. Scholars such as Affrica Taylor (2013) have emphasized that the nature-culture divide proposed by childhood studies

is no longer something we can hold on to if we want to explain the current worlds we live on, with their complexities and practicalities. However, while social theory has started moving away from the kind of dichotomous thinking that framed modernist theories (Latour, 1993, 2004), childhood studies seem stuck in this pendular movement between nature (development theories) and culture (new social studies of childhood). Therefore, it becomes imperative to search for new metaphors and ideas that could better capture the processual, unexpected, and unstable aspects of contemporary life-worlds children inhabit. And to do so, the dismissal of materiality advanced by the New Social Studies of Childhood seems largely inefficient. From current considerations about our flickering future and the Anthropocene to technological advances in the life sciences and technology, materiality has once again been placed in the spotlight as something ineludible when reflecting on how we can shape and live our lives. Semiotic and material aspects of human life have proven to be plastic and intertwined. In this sense, it is widely accepted that children and humans are not determined by their biology but, at the same time, we are increasingly aware that—as Donna Haraway (1991, p. 198) cogently argued—"the world is not raw material for humanization." Any theorization that wants to account for current childhoods must be able to grasp their complexities and unfoldings.

Beyond Essentialisms: Hybrid Childhoods, Entangled Childhoods

Attempting to rescue children from their secondary role in social sciences, scholars interested in childhood have attributed to children similar characteristics to those commonly accredited to adults. Nick Lee (1998) discusses this when reflecting on how social studies of childhood intended to provide an alternative to the interest imbued in children from developmental and socialization theories, which regarded them as incomplete, primitive versions of the adult which, in return, were deemed as finished, completed versions of the human. By being reflected upon as agentic creatures, endowed with the capacity for social action and social change, children became worthy of being studied not only as a passing stage of the developmental cycle but because their lives and actions became interesting and noteworthy. Lee mentions that "this agentic conception of childhood, so strategically necessary in the formation of the sociology of childhood's

distinctive research field, relies on the decision that causal and/or interpretative agency rest within children as their property and possession" (p. 458). But while this thinking about children as agentic and self-sufficient provided an alternative for childhood studies, this very idea was being increasingly contested in other fields of social sciences.

Until not long ago, theories too close to modernist ideals of humanism have divided the social world between the natural and the cultural, between being and becoming, and between what is given and what is produced. Now, these theories are held up to examination and critique because of their insufficiency to grasp the shifting and elusive worlds we currently inhabit (Connolly, 2011, 2013). Dichotomous thinking has proved insufficient to account for the current crises we have experienced during the past decades. From the ecological to the geopolitical, these different and interconnected crises have shown us that there is no real division between the human and the world, us and them, and nature and culture, as our current and future existence is deeply intertwined. Therefore, social theories that can account for this more processual, dynamic, and entangled idea of existence and agency have gained currency during the last decades, as they proved to be better prepared to reflect upon what it means to be human under these new conditions (Bennett, 2010; Frost, 2018) and to offer explanations on how we manage ourselves and are managed by others for different purposes in these new arrangements (Rose & Abi-Rached, 2013). This approximation is summarized by Rosi Braidotti (2013) when arguing in favor of substituting binary oppositions for the sake of privileging non-dualist theories that underscore interactions between nature and culture. For Braidotti, social theory needs to seriously take into consideration the implications that this shift has for research as a political practice and for how we conceptualize and approach the participants of our investigations.

For childhood studies, going beyond the nature-culture divide allows for a new understanding of what it mean to be a child, as non-binary theories question the very origin of such bifurcation. But it is not only the question about whether children are natural or cultural creatures that is dismissed as reductionist by these new understandings. Also, the spaces children inhabit became complexed and enrichened, advancing new explanations about their composition and dynamics. As Affrica Taylor has pointed out, children's common worlds—the worlds they daily inhabit and share with other human and nonhuman beings—are not "separated, pure and natural utopic spaces. They are mixed up worlds in which all

manner of things co-exist—including the manufactured and the organic, the living and the inert, entities and forces, and humans young and old" (2013, p. 80). To this, she adds one important point: human beings are not the only ones driving the assembling of these common worlds as this process of common worlding is produced by the heterogeneous relations that take place among all these elements. Thus, childhood studies inspired by this theoretical framing must set to the task of accompanying the everyday life of children as they co-exist with other human and nonhuman actors while carefully considering that there is no essence to neither childhood nor children, as both these categories are products of ongoing dynamics of assemblages (Kraftl, 2013; Malone, 2016; Prout, 2005, 2011; Taylor, 2013; Taylor & Blaise, 2014). There is no such a thing as a fixed essence of childhood or children but—as it has been cogently argued in relation to human agency in general by Jane Bennett (2010)—the task of "demystifying" this supposedly (human) nature, which cannot rely solely on explanations based on human actions, forces, and powers. Children's ontologies—this is, what children "are" in a given time, space, and location—are relational and therefore can be multiple and divergent, as things and beings can come into existence differently, through multiple encounters that occur in the process of relating.

The bridging of dichotomic ideals and concepts offer social theories the chance to creatively renew themselves in light of relevant social considerations that have taken place during the last decades and whose influence and consequences are being felt now stronger than ever, as is the case of globalization, or the current climate and migration crises (Latour, 2003). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent policies implemented in different countries have reshaped everyday living and experiences (Savransky, 2020). The experiences and practicalities of growing up in a time of crisis is lucidly expressed by Karen Malone (2018) as she wonders about the emerging conditions linked to current childhood on their relationships with the Anthropocene and how this has affected our common existences. The Anthropocene—the deeply human-influenced and precarious time we currently live in—shows us how our ontology is closely linked to the fate of the planet and how the (un)careful actions we perform on our environments directly impact our everyday lives. This idea of interacting actors requires acknowledging the agential capacity that the nonhuman has on our lives and therefore to understand children as part of ongoing and shifting entanglements composed by heterogeneous actors, where ontology is not a given fact but a relational process (Tsing et al.,

2017; for a more specific discussion about the challenges [social] psychology faces under the Anthropocene cf. Adams, 2017, 2020).

By relational ontology, we aim at highlighting the idea that the key to understanding childhood under this scope is to focus on relations. Murris (2021) summarizes this idea when arguing that "a relational ontology troubles the idea that there *are* (i.e. exist) preexisting, separately determinate entities of one kind or another that exist prior to the relation they are part of" (p. 7). This is of capital importance when thinking about some of the conundrums linked to the idea of childhoods in majority vs minority worlds. If childhood is always local and relational, the assumption that childhood encompasses a set of similar experiences worldwide becomes disrupted. As highly relational phenomena, childhoods are to be considered as entanglements of material and semiotic elements and indisputably affected by forces that go beyond the material limits of the body (Rojas Navarro, 2018; Rojas Navarro & Rojas, 2019). This standpoint clashes with the previous assumption about the child as a single-bounded and closed entity, wrestling with other actors in order to reassure his or her agency. Rather, it advances the idea that children and commonworlds are intertwined with and emergent of interactions and processes of getting together, being performed differently thanks to these encounters (Barad, 2003).

In part, this relational thinking had already been incorporated in a mild sense by some scholars working on childhood studies, mainly under the idea of the generational order (Alanen, 2009; Mayall, 2002). Yet, their interest in relationality is reduced to how different generations are enmeshed in power dynamics which define the role of children and adults as the result of tacit and explicit processes of negotiation. But the kind of relationality we argue in favor is more radical in nature, drawing on a renewed sense of relevance given to matter in social sciences (Coole & Frost, 2010). Although this is still a new inclination in exploring childhood, the scholars and researchers aiming to bridge posthumanist approaches with childhood studies have questioned fundamental premises of the alternative paradigm pushed forward by the New Social Studies of Childhood. Spyrou (2019) notes that this allowed to rethink how knowledge is produced in this field under new ideas such as "multiplicity," "becomings," and "networks." But more importantly, it enabled to overcome some taken-for-granted orthodoxies and dogmas, as the multiple and the questioning of ontology can be used to interrogate essentialisms in multiple fields of interest for childhood studies. Thus, the interrogation

moved forward by relational ontologies forces us to redefine how we think about identity and agency—not anymore as a given but as emergent properties of situated entanglements. It forces thinking about childhood as performed through practices in a determined place and time, amidst specific power relations and in accordance with a particular culture, in company with human and nonhuman actors with whom children build their everyday common worlds.

Putting a Posthumanist Psychosocial Theory of Childhood into Practice

How can the social psychology of childhood face the challenges posed to it by such a disparate array of sources? How can it tackle the heterogeneous set of challenges posed by problems and theories as diverse as posthumanism, the risks and urgencies of the Anthropocene, and the ethical, political, and methodological sensibilities and questions raised by current trends in social theory claiming for the importance of turning to relationality and materiality to understand the hybrid nature of our current forms of existence? A precise, single answer to this matter eludes us for now. Still, we can sketch some options and advance some venturesome possible routes to follow.

The attempt to open up psychology and social psychology to other theoretical and methodological references, more sensitive to the relational character of the entities and phenomena they tackle, is not new. For at least two decades, the voices of old forerunners from psychology and social psychology, such as Gabriel Tarde, William James, Henri Bergson, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead, have been revitalized through a generous, creative, and inventive re-appraisal by a diverse group of contemporary theoreticians and researchers. Thereby, these voices from the past have been invited to join the contemporary debates we have highlighted so far, due to the capacity their work has shown to anticipate the hybrid, open-ended, processual, relational, emergent, and more-than-human concerns of both our current lives and academic endeavors. Thus, their arguments and concepts have provided an important critical toolbox for reshaping traditional understandings of "the psychological" and/or "the psychosocial," in general, or psychological processes and concepts such as memory, conscience, personality, affect, and so on (Blackman, 2007, 2008; Middleton & Brown, 2005; Rojas, 2017; Stenner, 2017).

In addition, contemporary researchers have sought support and inspiration in other fields such as philosophy, the humanities, and neuroscience, to infuse vitality, materiality, and relationality as means to provoke, challenge, and let go of a number of usual social psychological assumptions of the "the psychological" or "the psychosocial" as something associated to (1) a single-bounded, individual, and autonomous subject; (2) an interior and eminently cognitive space; (3) a matter of simply studying the "individual" when in social situations (what has been typically identified as "psychological social psychology" (Ibáñez, 2004)); and (4) the psychological/psychosocial as unidirectionally determined by and shaped by wider, all encompassing, always human, social, cultural, or historical forces (or a "sociological social psychology" (Ibañez)).

The aforementioned does not mean that we are minimizing the complexities and subtleties involved in the study of "the individual" as a possible subject for social psychology. Neither are we downplaying the enormous relevance of categories such as class, gender, race, and so on, in shaping the psychosocial—they are crucial, and in fact, in this chapter we have been thinking with two of those categories (children and childhood). What we argue for is for an expansion of our analytic tools for psychosocial action and thought. If "the psychosocial" can be understood, above all

> as a movement, but not -as actions and behaviors do- a movement that tends to or points towards a goal or a completion, but a movement for which it's finality is its own unfolding, as it happens in dance, a waltz, a tango, a slam, where all the steps are executed for the sake of executing them, for that movement to exist, almost with the sole purpose of not stopping. (Fernández Christlieb, 2011, p. 56)

Then, how can we follow or join the unfolding and singularities of this movement, particularly in relation to childhood? First, we agree with Brown and Stenner's (2009, p. 5) proposal of (social) psychology as being "all about following human experience through the myriad of forms that it takes, including the forms mediated by scientific psychology itself." Social psychology must attend to experience, in this case the experience embodied, enacted, and lived by those we have come to identify as children or related to the field we call childhood. However, this makes sense only when letting go of the idea of experience as limited to an interior phenomenon or something "belonging" to an individual, an ungraspable consciousness, a sovereign subject, a mind, a closed subjectivity, or a

narcissistic ego (Jay, 2005). But it also demands of us not reducing experience to an exceptional human product currently in crisis, threatened by capitalist techno-science (in opposition of the "authentic" human experience of a golden age long since passed) nor a mere epiphenomenon determined and mass produced by linguistic structures, social discourses, or power relations. If we are, as Brown and Stenner (2009, p. 6) suggest, "hybrid creatures with multiple forms of heritage: creatures of biochemistry, creatures of consciousness, creatures of communication," then we must attend to the vitality, hybridity, inventiveness, and complexity of human experience.

Under this scope, power, image, proposition, and enunciation do not act as self-contained essences but rather as "mutually mediating connective nodes or links in unfurling chains of process and becoming" (Brown & Stenner, 2009, p. 10). Yes, power and social discourses "capture" and replicate privileged forms of experience and relation to ourselves and to others. No, they do not manage to achieve it completely.

Thus, the inclusion of posthumanist, relational, and material sensitivities in this chapter can nurture a social psychology that is excited about exercising a new approach, one that analyses individuals as problems amid the folding and unfolding of the vitality of human experience in its relatedness to both human and more-than-human elements and agencies. This new route would pose psychology and social psychology an obligation and, at the same time, provide them with a possibility: to "unravel the specific pattern of processes that have connected previously unrelated sets of heterogeneous relations into perceivable forms of individuation" (Tucker, 2012, p. 781). It is under this scope that we value Nichterlein and Morss' (2016, p. 36) provocative characterization of the problem of current (social) psychology:

> what seems to be happening in mainstream psychological explanation is that a leap is made between studying components or facets and celebrating the unifying holistic entity that encloses and integrates all those subsidiary factors.

Thus, psychology seems to move jumping between a limited and rigorous experimental account of fragmented, specialized, and modularized mental functions (such as memory, motivation, learning, etc.) and "an intuitive appeal to what we all understand" (Nichterlein & Morss, 2016, p. 36). What these authors counter propose is to change the discipline's

scope and, drawing on the work of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, invite us to center our attention not in the individual but in an assemblage, not in the subject but in its vitality and life. This is coherent with Tucker's invitation to focus on individuation, which we mentioned above.

In light of what we have discussed so far, we can argue that scholars and researchers interested in childhood and children are currently facing an interesting conundrum. Although for a long time now, social psychologists have relied on concepts and ideas underpinned by developmental theories to unravel the acquisition and transformation of different elements of children's features, they seem to be missing a significant part of children's lives and experience. Of course, this does not mean that their efforts have been futile. Their approach has undoubtedly been successful in illuminating key milestones in the process of growing up in specific societies and has provided educators, parents, professionals, and common people with concepts and ideas that have become part of our folk understandings of childhood and children. However, as we have extensively argued, there is much that is missing in these accounts. Mainly, the overarching popularization of developmental accounts in the psychological sciences has prevented the possibility of thinking about childhood differently, in nonlinear, contingent, and situated ways. While attempting to understand the universal child, the psychological sciences seem to have overlooked key aspects of the complex, multidetermined, historically, and culturally situated composition of childhood and the essentially intertwined and relational features of children's life-worlds, as these elements go way beyond to the reduction of children to a set of capacities. As Spyrou argues, we can never fully get to know "the child," but we can only get to know a version of her:

> a cut in an entangled world in order to delineate particular categories and understandings of the child which speak not for what the child as a category is but how she comes into being in time and space exhibiting particular capacities which could be otherwise within another set of assembled relations. (2019, p. 222)

Amidst a world enmeshed in growing uncertainty, where we are constantly being reminded of our own frailty and confronted with our intimate linkages with others (Palsson et al., 2013), we strongly support the need to widen our field of action and update our theories and concepts not only to identify and capture how the current crises modify our

understanding of childhood but also to explore what childhood can become in times like this and how these novel understandings play in producing different futures. This is an ethical and political commitment: in a world under a myriad of accelerated transformations, we have to give an account of the rich, vital, often contested, heterogeneous ways in which that entity and form of individuation—*a* child—singularly and temporarily stabilizes/is stabilized and provide explanations that tackle the enormous complexity of how—and with which consequences, for what and for whom—does that assemblage of material and semiotic, human and more-than-human, elements, known as "childhood" specifically holds and is made to hold together and apart in arrangements that make possible—or close—specific forms of living, ways of building a common world, and relationalities of cooperation, exploitation, suffering, or—we hope, especially—joy.

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CHAPTER 8

Performativity, Cybernetic Subjectivities and Politics of Psychology: Devices for Other Agencies

Claudia Calquín Donoso and Iván Torres Apablaza

Introduction

"Going from the ghosts of faith to the specters of reason is nothing more than being changed cells"

(The Book of Disquiet, Fernando Pessoa)

We agree with Martinez (2011) that the history of psychology is the story of uneasiness, that is, a struggle with itself, a battle to achieve an identity that unfolds over a set of questions about its nature, modes of existence, and social function. At the same time, uneasiness leads us to the possibility of dis-configuration as law, that is to say, to a constant undoing of discipline, following that formula that allows the poet Fernando

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Pessoa—whom we cite in the epigraph—to capture a certain experience interested in recovering the limit of an identity that is always unfinished, necessarily unfinished.

Considering these two figures of discomfort, the reflection that we develop aims to analyze the formation of a version of the contemporary psychological subject that coincides with a particular way of interpreting the nature of knowledge anchored to the techno-military imaginary of the twentieth century, and which hinders the formation of new understandings of the psychological subject at the same time, that its possibilities of political agency. In this way, the text moves in coordinates that go from the verification of the critical examination to the desire to upset the discursive rituals of psychology and the relationship of servitude with a dominant version of the language that it imposes and the subject that it proposes; this version is nothing other than that of humanism, typical of the human sciences within which the social sciences and psychology are constituted (Foucault, 1966). For this, we have chosen to focus our attention on the *order of the discourse* of psychology, especially that which emerges after the Second World War and which organizes the wide field of the so-called cognitive sciences, analyzing its objects and one of the rhetorical resources—metaphors—through which those are produced and materialized, from a methodological practice that is less interested in marking errors than in highlighting the erased traces of the production processes of statements, to reveal the very political nature of psychology. Following this purpose, the article is organized from a reflection on the computational metaphor of psychology as a hegemonic mode of representation of the discipline, placing special emphasis on showing the closures of these representation devices, to finally propose a reflection that find an affirmative dimension, properly *po-etic*, capable of thinking about the performative character of subjectivities.

On Tropes and Metaphors: The Keys to Reading a Problem

In *Foucault Revolutionized History*, the French historian Vayne (1984) highlights that the greatest contribution of Michel Foucault's thought was to deny the transhistorical reality of the objects of knowledge, leaving enough objective reality for them to continue being objects of explanation and not mere spectra subjective. This—which Veyne himself indicates as the theory of discontinuities—establishes that there is no evolution and modifications of the same object that always occupies the same place over time; the metaphor used by Veyne is that it is a "kaleidoscope and not a

hotbed," with which a theory of knowledge is clothed with meanings in which mobility, multiplicity, and variation are established as substantive attributes. Knowledge, according to this metaphor, would be characterized by a discontinuous narrative that offers an ordered succession of images capable of artistically configuring chance, chaos, and the complexity of life. In this way, the objects of knowledge are revealed and owe their appearance and emergence against the background of something that are not themselves or a mere context that would give unity to meaning, but, rather, in the game of enunciations that are stressed with each other and unfold like an unstable surface in which the solidity of the referent has dissolved. This, which Michel Foucault develops as the *order of discourse* (1970) and then complements under the knowledge-power relationship (1986), is the plane that allows to account for the modes from which the statements and the regimes of enunciation they are coextensive with non-discursive formations or relations of forces.

This last aspect allows us, on the one hand, an approach to psychological discourse as a social practice that materializes and stages these relationships. On the other, note their own forms of chaining and succession, considering the interdependence between the forms of representation and the historical conditions of possibility of their emergence. All representation, by involving a certain regime of truth, is therefore inseparable from a specific historical and political reality. From this point of view, psychology would then be nothing other than the way in which a certain knowledge about man is stratified and codified from the nineteenth century on (Foucault, 1966), at the same time as that knowledge that allows subjecting the technologies of modern power (Foucault, 2005). For this reason, it is precisely that intellectuals like Georges Canguilhem (1958) have thought about this problematic constellation, emphasizing the properly policing character of psychology.

Said like this, understanding the emergence of psychological objects in the traces of the order of discourse is to wonder less about the validity of the statements and more about the political actuality of the cultural meanings that run through psychology and the way in which they are endowed with legitimacy scientist, from an enunciative position that is interested in recovering the material connections between scientific truth, discursive actuality, and power relations, in other words, to account for the ways in which stories of struggles and exclusions have crystallized in the field of representation (Hall, 1997). The order of discourse allows us to stage the thaumaturgical properties of words or what Austin (1981) called the

power of the performative, to create what it claims to represent. Thus, analyzing the subject as a discursive object of psychology implies a critical examination of its naturalistic foundations and the operations that make it transparent and that are problematic, despite giving it the appearance of consistency and ontological continuity.

One of the alternatives that have been recovered with greater enthusiasm in recent years in discursive studies is the analysis of the tropological properties of scientific language. By tropes, we understand those rhetorical elements consisting of the use of a word with a figurative meaning. Thus, both figurations and tropes address the power and relevance of imagination and fiction in science stories and the ability of scientific language to bring together the imaginary and the real and create images of thought and position maps, inscribed and embodied, which configure semiotic-material worlds in which we inhabit. Therefore, tropes are not a mere ornamental element of language, a distortion factor, or a semantic anomaly that would threaten the order of literal discourse; on the contrary, tropes materialize their reflective dimension, that is, the possibility of turning, turning, displacing, and undoing the solidity of the referent, dissolving, at the same time, the binary opposition between literal, scientific, or rational language and metaphorical or poetic language.

According to Donna Haraway (1995), tropes are revealed as an important analyzer of scientific narratives or, rather, of the fictional narrative of scientific facts in which *science facts* and *science fiction* appear as knotted tissues with the same material: the action and human experience. The tropes of science tell us that the facts are not there to be discovered; facts are made, fabricated, concocted, and simulated in the complex interplay of material, literary, social, and political technologies (Shapin & Shaffer, 2005). Thus, scientific practice is made possible by means of rhetorical constructions that contribute "coherence, a sense of totality and persuasive potentiality" (p. 137) to the categories with which the world becomes the object of scientific explanation and experimentation. It should be noted that the analysis of tropes, unlike other analytical tools, does not attend to a hermeneutic of hidden content, errors, representations, or latent ideologies; their power lies in the fact that they strictly adhere to what they explicitly say. Lizcano (2009) alerts us that even the most formalized language, such as mathematical language, incorporates or is born from rhetorical nuclei in what we could call a tropological condition of knowledge.

In Nietzsche we find other coordinates, insofar as he shows us that the human being is not so much a being that speaks but rather a being that creates metaphors: "That impulse towards the formation of metaphors, that fundamental impulse of the human being, that nowhere moment can be eliminated because this would eliminate the human being himself " (Nietzsche, 1896, p. 617). With the same critical intensity, the German philosopher thinks of the artificial and arrogant character of all knowledge. As he points out, "in a remote corner of the universe, which sparkles scattered in innumerable solar systems, there was once a star in which cunning animals invented knowing. It was the most arrogant and liar minute in "world history": but, after all, it was only a minute" (p. 619). Every form of knowledge is fundamentally historical and therefore an invention—an art, in the Greek sense—insofar as it is the product of a certain relationship with the world. But, at the same time, Nietzsche reminds us of the "archaic scene" of this invention: "The things themselves, in whose consistency and permanence the narrow mind of men and animals believes, do not in fact have a true existence, they are the flash and the lightning produced by drawn swords, they are the glow of victory in the struggle between opposing qualities" (Nietzsche, 1873, p. 587). All knowledge, as well as everything that exists, is the brilliant product of the clash between swords, that is, of relations of forces. There is no neutrality, objectivity, or asepsis, but agonal encounters, disputes for the truth on the stage of history.

From this point of view, the relevant thing would not be to focus on what the words mean but rather to look at the paths, shortcuts, and twists used to connect words to things, that is, all paths and movements that language itself performs to produce its literalness; in other words, to produce the representation.

Metaphors reveal the procedures of appropriation, reformulation, and translation of previous categories, incorporating existing frameworks of meaning in society and, likewise, producing meanings that are used by people to give meaning to their existence. The tropological analysis allows activating a critical "ontology" that reveals the contingency of the categories of psychology as well as its hegemonic narratives that have significantly impacted contemporary culture, to the point that for Illouz (2014) it is possible to speak of a psi culture that indicates that psychology is not only limited to describing human behavior but also reveals itself as a device to produce truth and subjectivities.

In another field of objects, this is precisely what Michel Foucault demonstrated from the displacement that goes from the *order of discourse*

(Foucault, 1971), through the *technologies of knowledge-power* (Foucault, 1976), until arriving at the *regimes of truth* (Foucault, 2006). If there is something of the ontological at stake in all this analytic that uses tropes, it is precisely because the representation does not imply only a "putting into language" a certain object but giving it existence, determining its regime of appearance and visibility: What is the mind, the psychic? What are its constitutive aspects and processes? What is a normal state, and what distinguishes it from a pathological one? Heredity or environment? Individual or society? These are some of the questions that have historically animated this ontological "drive" of psi knowledge. If we were to bring together these constitutive questions of this specific form of knowledge and representation, we would have to accept that they all converge around a humanistic knowledge, that is, a representation of the essence of "human reality," which makes it a metaphysical reflection, by assuming an origin, as well as a destination and a constitutive *end* of the "essence" of man (Heidegger, 2016). And we know—according to what we have pointed out about Nietzsche—that a representation is nothing but an invention, as well as a way of metaphorizing that which has no meaning (Nietzsche, 1882). Faced with the unspeakable and chaotic of existence, facing the nothingness that is its unfounded foundation, the representation of man tries to give a form and a meaning to that which does not have it and that which lacks any representation capable of doing justice to its lack of meaning, its lack of purpose, and, therefore, its radical exuberance and power of invention.

In the metaphor, the cultural imaginary is said verbatim, or, more precisely, at the foot of the image (Lizcano, 2009) since these establish an isomorphism between images, forms, and multiple sensitive experiences, which most of the sometimes they obey, especially in science, a visual experience. In the same way, in the metaphor, thought and life are combined; the similarities that operate over oppositions and distinctions are discovered. The metaphor is a capture of things through a dominant image; it is a form of perception or imaginary capture that finds its basis in similarity, that is, in a "see how" (Oliveras, 2007). In *Les mots et les choses*, Michel Foucault (1966) tells us that until the eighteenth century similarity played a constructive role in the knowledge of Western culture. In part, it was she who guided the exegesis and interpretation of the texts: the one that organized the game of symbols, the one that allowed the knowledge of visible and invisible things, and the one that governed the art of representing them. Returning to metaphor is a transgression of the will to conceptualize the world and to indicate that images, imagination, and sensible

experience are what makes it possible for us to inhabit it. Lakoff and Johnson (1998) argue that metaphors connect words to immediate experiences, be it bodily, environmental, or cultural. Thus, in the *ruby lips* we imagine the lover's lips as that red and transparent crystal in which we see and experience the voluptuousness of desire. Ruby lips not only attend to a shape and a color but to a world and a desire to inhabit. We speak of a particular way of apprehending things and, methodologically, of apprehending the discursive formations that claim to represent those things. More than from practices of enclosure and distinction, typical of rational thought, the metaphor guides us during traffic and semantic loans that displace a dense layer of meaning, in terms of the representation and justification of each conception of things. In some way, metaphor inhabits the gap between logos and sensation, making language a field of organization and proliferation of meaning. For this reason, its resource is habitual and daily in literature and poetry, precisely because it is more than a rational representation of things and their relationships. It is in this sense that it is possible to find its power, as well as its risks.

If the appearance of a metaphor is an interpretive guide that leads to certain conditions of possibility of scientific language, the tropes of psychological language led us to the sensible worlds where the identity of the things that psychology talks about are delineated. In this sense, it is not our interest to discuss the heuristic value of metaphors or whether they match a scientific or more accurate description of the mind. Rather, we are interested in addressing the semiotic dimension of metaphorical analysis, that is, the regimes of signs that are organized as subjection devices at the service of power formations. The metaphors petrified, sedimented, dead, or "zombies"—as Lizcano (2009) says—reveal the deepest layers of instituting practices that have been frozen in regimes of truth and that, as such, are taken for granted. Thus, the imaginary substrate of the simile that made the metaphor vero-simile shifts to a simple vero, pure and simple truth, that is, purified and simplified of the imaginary magma from which it emerged (Lizcano, 2009, p. 62). The metaphors of psychology indicate the historical and cultural worlds that the discipline inhabits, that is, the conditions of possibility of psychological discourse, which try to circumvent the false game of oppositions between the rational-irrational, thereby revealing the normative dimension of psychological discourse. That, on the one hand, makes it possible to distinguish between desirable representations and objects from those not desirable and, on the other, to find a regulatory criterion that allows distinguishing between correct and incorrect actions.

Metaphors That Psychology Thinks: Between Computers and Control Machines

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? It is the question with which the American writer Philip K. Dick (1968) leads us to a postapocalyptic fictional world, the aftermath of an ecological disaster and a Terminal World War. Most of the human inhabitants have escaped to the colonies in outer space, and the animals, almost in extinction, have been replaced by mediocre electrical prototypes commercialized in the artificial pet market. The story tells of a bounty hunter, Deckart, who hunts down rogue androids every morning, simulated humans who have reached human form and intelligence, but are incapable of compassion. These artificial creatures are only discovered by means of a psychological test, the empathy test, restorer of the difference between human and machine at a time when the borders have been dissolved. The novel, in this way, explores the limits of code, programming, technology, and the urgency of communicating experience and intimacy, beyond informational programming of affective immanence. Even in this post-human world plagued by "protein transformation and connections" (Haraway, 1984), in which the question about the dream of machines leads us to the center of new concerns that unfold with the emergency, from the Second World War, of the so-called metaphor of the computer as a privileged translator in our contemporaneity, of the mind, mental processes, the lives of human beings and their relationship with the world.

Although the dream of a thinking machine—the *mathesis universalis*—accompanies the emergence of modern rationalism, it is with the so-called cognitive revolution that this thinking machine acquires its materiality, paradigm status, and metaphorical field of contemporary psychology. Thus, from the first half of the twentieth century, the philosophical attempts at a universal language based on the formalized representation of reality acquired a form and a techno-scientific consistency through a precise formula: simulation. It is from Turing's experiment that the first contemporary attempts to create an intelligent machine that simulate human thought or the ontoepistemological conditions on which it is based were shaped. When the mathematician wondered if machines could think, he established the imitation of intelligent behavior in terms of following a set of formal rules as the threshold of success for such an experiment, on the condition that a human was not able to distinguish that machine from another human based on the answers given to the questions posed to both

the machine and the human. The interesting thing is that, although the simulation paradigm asked about the ability of machines to imitate human behavior, the development of artificial intelligence (AI) reverses the relationship of who imitates who (or what); then, according to the postulates of the development of AI, by replicating human cognitive function in machines, it is possible to better understand what that function is in humans. In this way the cognitivist promises of "opening the black box" was made possible by identity and substitution relations between machine and man, thus establishing that, between the brain and the mind, there would be a relationship like that which exists between hardware and computer software, all this theoretically supported by the development of the representational theory of mind and the hypothesis of the physical symbol system of Newell and Simon (Bächler, 2017).

Another of the anchor points of this episteme is cybernetics, which plays a fundamental role. There, the objective that guides the research is the development of communicational models and the control of the behavior of dynamic systems (Wiener, 1948). Based on these foundations, the study of information processing mechanisms and procedures is translated as a true programmatic of the activity of psychological science in planes that involve the discipline in a transversal way, from experimental psychology to social psychology. These vocabularies serve cognitivism to create an interpretation of the production of knowledge to cognitive and individual processes of input and output of information and not as relational processes or using another metaphor, the result of complex interfaces. In this way, the knowledge process is anchored to the programming action. We are talking about integrated circuits and other related components that can execute with accuracy, speed, and, according to what is programmed by a user or by another program, a great variety of sequences or instruction routines that are ordered, organized, and systematized according to a wide range of practical and precisely determined applications. Bustamante (1993) tells us that the term computer comes etymologically from the Latin verb *computare*, which originally refers to the calculations necessary to establish on which day of the year the mobile calendar holidays are set. From this meaning of festive calculation, another has been generated that refers to the political calculations carried out based on an algorithm, that is, a quantitative procedure or method of solving problems in a finite number of steps. The conjunction between programmable machines and cybernetic functioning leads to a particular way of governing action as it is procedures based on a circular causality in which there is no longer a central

intelligence that radiates from the top, responsible for decision-making, towards which information converges and it disseminates its decision through a hierarchy of agents, but rather an organization, a system, of decentralized and interactive control (Wiener, 1998).

But the fundamental problem of this metaphor does not only travel through the uncertain terrain of a mechanistic metaphysics but rather reaffirms an archaic tension that makes it return to its own institutional origins. That is, remaining ignorant with respect to its outside, to the historical and cultural conditions that constitute the condition of possibility of its categories, representations, and theoretical systems (Canguilhem, 1958). In other words, the cybernetic metaphor hides or leaves without questioning the discursive order in which its regime of truth is inscribed (Foucault, 1971), the ontology of which it is nothing but a subsidiary knowledge, and the notion of subject correlative to this ontology received and developed, but never noticed or problematized. From this point of view, ignorance from the outside becomes an obstacle in the exercise of critically thinking about the conditions of possibility of psychological knowledge and the deeply discursive dimension in which it inscribes its episteme. If the warning of Ernesto Laclau (2015) is followed from this problematization according to which, the relationships between metaphors and metonymies (mobility and serial chaining of the mechanisms of meaning of language) are not of exclusion but of coexistence in the organization of a narrative and a semantic field, it is possible to argue that what at one time founded a relationship of contiguity between the mind, the brain, and the computational machines has moved towards a substitution relationship, in which the mind becomes the computer, establishing with this is a deeply problematic "onto-psychology." The question then arises: what regime of signs organizes this substitution relationship between mind-computer?

The studies of historical epistemology by Georges Canguilhem (1959) are particularly relevant to understand the way in which a certain object of knowledge, a scientific discovery, or a specific theory finds its singularity in the line of continuity between historical-cultural transformations (such as the Industrial Revolution or the technological development of advanced capitalism) and a diverse field of knowledge that exceeds disciplinary and authorial concerns. Although the computational metaphor performs knowledge without an outside (a context of justification), we note that these transformations did not occur in a historical vacuum but rather as accompanying changes in technical objects, as well as the technologies of power within a novel dynamic of capitalist reproduction. In this sense, we

must not lose sight of the conception of science and technology that inhabit the computational metaphor as results of the assembly between technological will and will to power, in which the automatisms that it proposes as an image of subjectivity, themselves do not they are automatic, but have been thought, manufactured, accepted, disputed etc. in terms of a politics of knowledge articulated to the industrial-military complex that emerged with the Second World War. In this sense, the cybernetic metaphor connects a field that is outside of itself (technological, social, economic, and political) to a contemporary war model, and its consequent technical objects, which provide a solution to the concerns of how to defeat the enemy and direct the bombings[1]. If "politics is the continuation of war by other means" according to the Foucauldian formula[2], cybernetics harbors and nurtures a particular conception of the strategic nature of

[1] During World War II, Norbert Wiener, an American mathematician, professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), worked for the United States Armed Forces as part of a project to guide anti-aircraft artillery automatically using radar. The objective of the project was to predict the trajectory of the bombers and with it to properly orient the firing of the batteries, through corrections based on the differences between predicted and actual trajectory, known as process innovations. As a result of the discoveries made in this project, he introduced the concepts of feedback and quantity of information, thus becoming the forerunner of communication theory and cognitive psychology. In 1948, he published the work *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in Animals and Machines.* This work, in which observations of physiological and neurophysiological control processes (contraction of the heart muscle, performance of the nervous system as an integrated whole) and the formalization of a general theory on technological control systems intersect, was the starting point for the "science of piloting" or cybernetics. This name was chosen for its reference to the governor or automatic rudder of ships, one of the first devices to have thought "for itself": one of the first forms, and one of the best developed, of feedback mechanisms. The elaboration of the "Predictor," the forecasting machine entrusted to Wiener, therefore requires a particular method of treating the positions of the aircraft and understanding the interactions between the weapon and its target.

[2] For Foucault, a requirement for an analysis of power that breaks with the scheme of the economic model of Marxism, as well as of liberalism and the legal model of political philosophy, is its definition as a relationship of forces, confrontations, or war, inverting the famous aphorism of the Prussian strategist Carl von Clausewitz who conceives war as the continuation of politics by other means, to affirm politics as a civilized form of war. This model of war that Foucault developed with greater force in the course at the Collège de France between 1975 and 1976 and published under the title *We must defend society* from our point of view has not received sufficient attention nor has it been taken to the ultimate consequences of this model of politics, for example, at the level of resistance. Maurizio Lazzarato in his last libretto *Capital hates everyone: Fascism or revolution* takes up this discussion in the close relationship between capitalism and war.

politics that configures a mode of sighting the enemy and directing missiles and remote-controlled war machines. Following the video artist and image theorist Hito Steyerl, the relationship between social technologies of automation and cybernetic control and what he calls the planetary civil war undermines the modern relationship between subject and stable object on a linear horizon of a flat surface—a field of battle—to affirm a disembodied and remote-controlled gaze that measures, anticipates, and reacts—at the point of initial programming—to the changing positions of the enemy, stabilizing them and reconverting to increase its own performance. Thus, cybernetics breaks the linear relationship between observer and observed, not to propose a critical paradigm, on the contrary, to institute a particular form of observation paradoxically located in nowhere and in all positions, according to Haraway, which makes it each more and more global and omniscient. This, which Haraway herself (Haraway, 1995) calls a *domination informatics*, cracks the modern domination matrices towards a postmodern engineering, in which information is a universal translator, a universal power, in which all resistance to an "instrumental control disappears and all heterogeneity can be dismantled, reassembled, inverted or exchanged" (p.281).

On the other hand, Steidel and Griziotti (2011) draw attention to how the invention of the *personal computer* (PC) during the second half of the twentieth century produced an important metonymic resonance in the notion of *bios*, which, since Ancient Greece, is reserved to distinguish the form of public life, that is, qualified in its political dimension, from zoé, as a private and reproductive life, common to everything living (Aristotle, 2018). Along with the emergence of this new computing machine, the *basic input/output system* (BIOS) is implemented for the first time, that is, a program that uses a computer's microprocessor to start the system once it is turned on and manage the flow of data between the operating system and connected devices. This *BIOS*, semantically reduced to a set of functions and operations that make it possible to determine the behaviors and peripheral components of machines, cuts and redirects the qualified and public life of the Greek *bios* to a vital model of a strictly cybernetic nature. In other words, we are faced with a new politics of life that redefines the very conditions of the human being, dissolving the human/machine separation, since in-forming would be the property of both the living and the machine.

These dissolutions (subject-object/human/machine) do not mean that the epistemic models of the cognitive sciences have overcome the

metaphysics of anthropological humanism by creating the conditions for what we could call a cyborlogy. By contrast, according to Simondon (2007), the *crude analogies* between living beings and machines that the computational metaphor carries out, rather, carry out this metaphysics by taking it to the extreme, because although the definition of mind ceases to be the exclusive property of the human species it is tied to an essence based on an operational and functional foundation and a recovery of the humanist assumptions of the Cartesian mind/body dualism in which the binary logic of *identity* continues to be central and its reason for being. The problem of anthropological humanism, as the foundation of knowledge and being in general—characteristic of modern thought, from René Descartes to the present day—and as the fundamental epistemic nucleus of the social sciences in general and psychological science, fails to be destabilized or interrogated by the computational metaphor. From it, the correlation between ontology and subjectivity is consummated (Derrida, 1968), that is, a certain representation of man that the metaphor comes to redouble, although in a completely paradoxical way: while the *code* continues to be the distinctive sign, the essence of man and his psychological processes, computational machines—in their purest programmable functionality—make the mind a field of intervention and meaningless heteronomy, rather than that of the information processing mechanisms and procedures that organize activity rational.

Therefore, the computational metaphor elaborates a theory of the subject that emerges as an empirical project on what the current bodies and machines, modified and technologically created, are capable of doing (Braidotti, 2013) in which mental phenomena would have attributes other than physical phenomena; the bridge between these diverse worlds would be the mental representations of information understood as the manipulation and transformation of symbols in specific regions of the brain[3] and

[3] For Jerry Fodor, who established the concept of *modularity* to explain perceptual and cognitive processes, the mind functions as a set of modules or computational processors in charge of various tasks. These concepts of cognitive psychology are collected at neurophysiological levels by the connectionist model, which understands that information is stored in neural networks, connections or circuits, these circuits or functional brain structures being the physical basis of mental modules. Brain plasticity provides the essential requirement of brain-mental modularity, since not only genetically given circuits are admitted but also new circuits that are created in the learning process. From this perspective, learning involves the modification of the structure of the brain in the process of creating new functional circuits (Bacáicoa, 2002)

that would connect perception and action. According to Braidotti, a structural identity relationship of the machine with the human being is established under humanist ideals that proclaim the uniqueness of identities and thereby denying the specificity and variability of humans and machines—specifically, what it composes the technical assemblage—and the interrelation between human and nonhuman as constitutive of the identity of each one. From our point of view, it is precisely this human capacity to affect, be affected, and act by breaking the initial programming, which the cybernetic model is not only incapable of explaining but also enables it to act as an experiment and a laboratory of social control. It is important to note that information leads us to the meanings of structured data sequences and, in its Latin root, to form something inward (in-formatio). This double matrix of meaning is suggestive of addressing some of Suely Rolnik's ideas about the modes of existence of subjectivity in capitalism. On the one hand, she indicates, we have a way in which the habit of forming and being formed made possible by sensible experience and according to sociocultural codes makes the experience of subjectivity a "subject" modeled according to the imaginary register of perception; its function would be to make it possible for us to locate ourselves in the world, to decipher the forms and codes of social life. This form makes the world a familiar world that is superimposed as a macropolitical record of pure reproduction under what she calls the domain of the capitalistic unconscious. But its hyperbolization is not equivalent to the absence of other modes and ways of apprehension. Indeed, Rolnik incorporates another mode, micropolitical, which obeys forces and intensities in what she calls a "vibrate" dimension and which she summarizes in the figuration of *agitated bodies*; it is about the dimension of the affections, irreducible to psychological emotions, and which, on the contrary, alludes to an eccentric experience and "outside the subject." Unlike the subjectivity-form-subject, the subjectivity-vibratile-desire appears to us as strange, unfamiliar, and as an index of the relation of alienation—separation—of the bodies of their own power; subjectivity-subject then implies remaining separated from a state of transmutation that does not cease and that inaugurates a field of knowledge/power that enables the question of desire (always perverse and polymorphic). Ruled by this micropolitical, the desire for Rolnik would then fulfill an ethical function of an active agent in the creation of other worlds—generator of *differentiating differences* in Braidott's words—that refuse to take a definitive form, that it resists being subject-in-dividual. Obviously, cybernetics operates by starting that power

to shape it into a subjectivity-form-subject through two ways, through the codification of the vibratile in imaginary formations gathered in a sovereign self (governor) that commands, coordinates sequence of data, among other programming functions, and for the control and incorporation and reduction of the strange, the novelty, and the entropy—its nightmare—to an organized unit and according to a stable operation (homeostasis). In other words, "folding the world to its laws in a continuous process of self-validation" (Tiqqun, 2001, p. 70).

Taking into account this problematic constellation, it is possible to see then that the computational metaphor not only results from the influence of technological development on culture from the second half of the twentieth century, as from a borderline experience of modernity in a desire to order and certainty implemented in a techno-scientific research program that links the production of thinking machines and computers to the development of a certain metaphysics in which all the processes of the living and non-living are seen as programmable automatisms of control and information management. Through these, new technologies of governance emerge over life from algorithmic forms of knowledge (Rodríguez, 2019) that are part of the contemporary horizon in which the cybernetic metaphor of man and subjectivity is expressed with all radicality. This leads us to think about the same politicity that runs through the computational metaphor, insofar as it has taken the form of a normative model of modulation of the subject or a rationality of government, which produces the subject as active participants in their own servitude, and that is translated into different spheres of the work of psychology among which stands out most strongly, for example, child development and its promises of brain optimization, early stimulation, and neural plasticity that make the epistemology of the epistemology of "good science and bad applications". The control society called by Deleuze (1990), originally baptized by Burroughs (1959), indicates that the mind as a computer is a capitalist formation in which the distinction between programmer and programmed is dissolved. Burroughs (2015) tells us that in control "the police force is not necessary. Psychological control is not necessary beyond pressing buttons to perform certain activations and operations" (p. 51). Inside this diagram, the subject is a closed system whose capacity for action resides in its "interior" and in its capacity for self-correction and in which no restriction is necessary by agents, differentiations, or "external" forces. From this point of view, cybernetics, as a government technology, creates the conditions for a social regulation based on devices (Foucault, 1975, 1976; Deleuze, 1989) and

social equipment (Rose, 2007) rather than in the apparatus-state in that communication and Burroughs's virus-language invades the subject, introducing itself as a parasite, usurping the characteristics of life to reproduce its informational chains and infect others.[4] An automated conscience, with the appearance of autonomy that responds to previously programmed actions and that lead "to the game on a predetermined path" (Fisher, 2019, p.223).

While this metaphor produces a subjectivity, it is arranged for the production of an order made up of statements and states of affairs, that is, its properly ontological dimension. From this point of view, the great challenge that knowledge has founded within cybernetics consists of trying to control uncertainty. The solution offered is its translation into information within a time series where certain data are already known and others are not yet. Thus, uncertainty, far from being an anomaly, is constantly introduced into the game of initial data and the deviation observed between the desired behavior and the actual behavior, so that both coincide when the deviation is canceled, as illustrated by the mechanism of a thermostat. What is established is the metaphysical problem of the foundation of an order from disorder. A problem, in a way, analogous to that of the disciplinary societies of the eighteenth century studied by Michel Foucault (1975), which try to govern their outside by enclosing their power of variation, thereby expressing the claim of all power: the total control of existence. However, it is an impossible task, therefore the problem of cybernetic order emerges in its historical specificity as a government of uncertainty (De Giorgi, 2006), according to functionalized immune devices in the task of balancing chaos, through a political economy of risk management. In other words, in the face of the ontological problem of the government of uncertainty, risk management is offered as the ontic possibility of governing the ungovernable, in which language is mainly reduced to its technification and to a mechanism closed in itself, leaving out its performative properties, that is, its properties to build unsuspected worlds not reducible to a priori programming—the territory par

[4] Burroughs (2013) uses the metaphor of the virus and not that of the bacterium; that is, it is something of the order of the non-living that acquires vitality once it is introduced into the organic body. In the essay "Feedback from Watergate to the Garden of Eden," he writes, "My fundamental theory is that the written word was literally a virus that made the spoken word possible. The word has not been recognized as a virus because it reached a state of stable symbiosis with the host … is the virus, then, a simple time bomb left on this planet to be activated by remote control? An extermination program?" (P.26)

excellence of resistances—in a movement that in itself is performative by simulating a reality that, like Borges's map (1960), ends up supplanting reality itself.

If cybernetic postulates raise the possibility that agency is not owned by humans, the distinctions made by Rolnik force us to ask ourselves about the nature of that capacity to act: is it differentially distributed between humans and nonhumans? Is there room for resistance, rupture, or break in the cybernetic metaphor? As Dick's story proposes (1968), can machines rise? Can they be opposed? Can machines wish? Until now, it would be a formation in which the interruption of the automatic mechanism is due to disorders, disturbances, machines fail, expire, and so on that can take the form of the human, but that are not equated with the break, rejection, and resistances of the vibrating body as the materialization of creative forces that are both challenging and destructive that explode the adaptation-maladjustment axis such as the balance-deviation cybernetic automatisms. From this point of view, cybernetic machines occupy a paradoxical place of servitude: on the one hand, their automatic nature prevents a possibility of revolt and uprising, and on the other, they subject the human to a determined formation, even in an organic plane. The problem, therefore, for Franco Berardi (2017) is that cybernetic machines inaugurate, together with forms of exchange and cooperation (a post-Fordism), a mode of production of subjectivity and a new sphere of reality: the infosphere. In it, the interface between information machines (mediascapes) and the organic mind occurs in a universe of accelerated flows of information, emissions, algorithms, and signs in a time characterized by its acceleration—cybertime—and that collides with (in) human capacity to elaborate and assimilate the immense and growing mass of information that current machines can produce. In summary, the cybernetic metaphor, its extensions and substitution relationships, makes visible the servitude of a mode of subjection in which "human beings tend to become ruthless executors of decisions taken without attention" (Berardi, 2017, p.180). That is why cybernetics is not simply a mere representation of the nature of the living and its extension to the mind but a foundation of reality and a framework of intelligibility for conducting behavior, in which information technologies and machine servitudes, according to Guattari, of the infosphere and cognitive sciences are fractally hybridized to enter intimate contact with life until they become indistinguishable.

The consequence is an *artificial bios*, technically created as a direct extension—no longer in opposition—to the cybernetic machine. The life

of worlds created by technologies, for example, virtual environments today, widely used in cognitive neurosciences, create other experiences of the real that lead to a series of questions about the productive dimension of new cybernetic forms of social subjection. As Franco Berardi (2017) himself states, these technologies promote the formation of a relatively independent technical being that appears next to the living being, in a kind of "operational autonomy" (p.184) in which technical networks infiltrate, in the manner of the cyborgs of Dona Haraway, in the organic sphere of the subject, disrupting the same anthropological framework of critical thought extended to psychology—critical psychology and anti-psychiatry, among others—a disruption that becomes its own limit and that runs the risk of rendering it irrelevant.

Threshold

As we have analyzed throughout these pages, the metaphor of the mind as a computer constitutes a twist in the plot of the history of psychology in which the machine is not so much a tool as if it is a matrix to produce statements and metaphors that surround the contours of the identity of psychology and its objects. If the printing press, the steam engine, and the cinema machine, among others, are devices that have marked an epochal condition of capitalism, we see that the assembly line of Fordism and its dreams of mechanical automatisms and disciplinary control is the stage through which behaviorism dreamed of optimizing behavior and that it replaced the valves and dynamos, of the nineteenth-century thermodynamic imaginary with which Freud inaugurates the field of the unconscious. A thousand machines are those that make psychology possible and beyond technophobia and technophilia, critical practice together with dismantling and accounting for the conditions of existence of that multitude of subjectivation machines, supposes, at the same time, a practice affirmative of imagining other devices that dissolve the boundaries between technique and aesthetics, between *tekné* and *aestetike*. This is to the extent that the machines are not exhausted to their technical plan. The metaphorical character of discourse, as we have shown, corresponds to that machinic dimension of language and its performativities, that is, machinations, montages, inventions, and fabrications.

Every machine expresses its own regime of invention—property that is historical, as we have developed it in this article—revealing its technical character with them. However, if the restrictive concept of the

technical—linked in our time to the technological—is not accepted, it will be seen that all technique aims at transforming the world (Heidegger, 1938). Therefore, the mode of invention of the subjectsis also technical. The difference between the technique that folds over the subjects and that which manufactures artifactual machines lies precisely in its *po-etic* dimension, insofar as subjectivities respond to creative modes of invention. In this sense, all poetic is an art, but in this case, it is an art of life. Every poetic gesture will therefore be *poiesis*, that is, the creative disposition of a transforming activity on life, capable of configuring an aesthetic of existence.

We consider that this entry into the problem developed in this article could open other possibilities for psychology, that is, possibilities of thought that are inseparable from its historical conditions of production. In a way, this is what Latin American social psychology articulated as criticism when stating the *crisis of relevance* of the epistemic models of what they considered to be a hegemonic discipline from the second half of the twentieth century. Conceiving the social sciences in general, and psychology, as a *po-etic* activity, provides the possibility of dissolving the metaphysics of the subject-object relationship on which all of them have founded their institutional architecture. Our proposal, by contrast, points in the direction of contacting poetry as that language of imagination, in which the wild forces of nature take shape, a kind of resonance box of our relationship with the world, of what in he moves us. Thus, *po-etics*, as a statement of every expressive disposition, makes possible the appropriation of experiences denied, obscured, and exiled: madness, political resistance, sexual dissidence, and everything that traditional psychology has represented as anomalous, pathological, or deviated from a moral standard never recognized. Po-*ethics*, on the other hand, configures a knowledge that springs from life and cannot be separated from its agonistic dimension, that is, from the framework of relations of forces on which all experience, even that of knowing, is based. If we had to transform all this reflection into a question, perhaps it could be formulated like this: what psychology and for what worlds? Attempting an answer certainly brings us back to the *crisis of relevance*, in the face of a contemporary experience of the closure of erotics and con-tacts, precisely where it is the exception that governs the compartments and vital possibilities. A poetic activity, on the other hand, opens the possibility of contacting the ecstasy of the excessive, of the free when what is thought is not only the subject and its relations but existence and its conditions, the interior of an exhausted world of

humanity (Nancy, 2003). We believe, in this precise sense, that if the social sciences, like psychology, want to be relevant, they could not avoid these problems nor the possibilities of thinking about an aesthetic of existence, that is, another politics of psychology, and other ways of relating to existence in general. Thinking, from here, about the problem of machines, could open a horizon of unsuspected problems.

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CHAPTER 9

Social Networks as Communities: Thinking the Social Fabric Against Algorithms

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The individualist savage, who searches for food or hunts for himself or for his family, never existed.
—Polanyi, 2000, p. 73

Introduction

The present work is framed in the discussions on sociability's interactions and practices in the digital environment. It emphasizes, on the one hand, the mark that these transformations are leaving in the collective subjects, and on the other hand, making visible the particular nuances, tensions and complexities with which these change processes are present today.

Social research agrees that for a large majority of the population, cultural consumption is limited to media such as radio and TV as a privileged

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source of access to information and entertainment. However, with the massification of the Internet, the use of smartphones and the inalienable closure of the years 2020–2021 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, questions arise that escape this perception and that are necessary to review. This can be observed in the context of the knowledge society, which shows its climax on the articulation of the so-called social networks, while knowledge, as a common good and as a tool, acquires a key strategic character through the use of networks in the collective organization. Knowledge, as it is understood today, is a resource that not only allows us to interpret the environment but also provides the possibility of acting. It is a resource that is found in people and objects—physical or not—, that these people use and that is distributed through the routes and scenarios of the virtual communities in which life takes place. The present work starts with a couple of questions that order the exercise: Is it possible to inhabit digital spaces to interrogate and rethink the social bond? And how are new sociabilities articulated through the use and appropriation of technologies?

Likewise, the current chapter stops on a parallel and oscillating observation between the act of suspecting about the use of technologies to perpetuate the systems of domination and re-feudalization of public space, and an enthusiastic look in relation to the technological evolution, which is clear from years of applied action research in the aforementioned field. *Technophobic* and *technophilic* discourses simplify and hide a complex reality of socio-technological change. In addition, an attempt will be made to problematize trends or traits that characterize the new sociabilities, interactions and practices in the digital medium, emphasizing, on the one hand, the impact that these transformations have had/are having on individual and collective subjects and, on the other hand, discussing the particular nuances, tensions and complexities with which these change processes can be understood.

This work is an effort to provide knowledge based on a theoretical and bibliographic review that allows us to understand mechanisms and models with which the so-called social networks are built, to later land on an investigation that records the evolution of a real virtual community of people with rheumatoid arthritis, where the distinction between social networks and community questions the status quo through a real experience of social support, in an exercise to give meaning to the meta-utilitarian perspective of the digital encounter.

Social Networks as Communities

Thinking social networks as a community is, at first glance, something not evident in everyday dialogue. Generally, organizations look for and make use of a new role called "community manager" that manages and updates the connection with users captured on social networks through information, contests and so on. This constitutes a mass and reduced form of the concept of community in the area of organizational management. From the psychosocial perspective, the community phenomenon refers to that social instance where individuals who share interests, interact in a sustained way over time. In this sense the community is in constant evolution and transformation while generating a sense of identity and belonging to the group. This supposes the community from the symbolic and relational field (Montero, M., 2004), as an entity that fosters social support, identity, own culture and, in a broad and abstract way of the term, space.

The social dynamics and the so-called customs of traditional communities in contrast to the new social dynamics, such as the Internet, lead us to think on the possibility of expanding the field of communities beyond its constitutive theoretical bases, renewing its academic weight and, thus, granting its modifications a statute of resource and/or intervening context that must be adapted to the evolutions of social dynamics that, at this time, are transferred to digitalization, especially with the pandemic that we have experienced in these times.

For this reason, the classic definition of community may not be adequate to speak of a virtual community even when there are shared aspects. And, as will be explained below, the characteristics of Internet social networks are far from what usually happens outside of them, so it is necessary to contextualize them.

To review and understand the current state of social networks, a brief historical tour on them is presented, which will be hand in hand with the work of José Van Dijck (2012, 2016). Social networks, according to the author, were born in the web 2.0 that is located at the beginning of the millennium, where web pages moved between spaces for the delivery of information towards becoming platforms in which the user interacts with them. In this quality of web, we can find today Facebook, blogs, YouTube and many others. With this, that accompanying phenomenon of web 1.0, which already predicted the appearance of the virtuality of communications and social relations as present aspects in the daily life of society, was strengthened under a sum of beliefs that announced them as a

democratizing and participatory technology. It is not necessary to debate about how much these expectations have or not been fulfilled, but it is suggested in this work that there is some of this in the current platforms, although they are under the comprehensive gaze of corporations that see in them a profitable business as far as information is concerned (Van Dijck, 2016).

Van Dijck (2016) comments that on one occasion Eduardo Saverin, co-founder of Facebook, suggested to Mark Zuckerberg that the web page was already in a position to start monetizing through advertising, to which he received the following response: "No, Facebook is cool and if we start selling pop-ups of Mountain Dew it's no longer going to be cool. We don't know what it is yet, we don't know what it can be, what it will be; we just know it's cool". In effect, the author continues, that moment reveals that the business models that occurred up to that moment were no longer viable for the new Internet era, which is why a new way of capitalization was necessary.

That is to say, the initial proposal of an Internet that fostered a democratic and equitable space for those who could access it discarded traditional capitalization models; which resulted in its reinvention through the acquisition of mechanisms that emphasize the individual as a consumer good after being converted into data on the same platform. This interferes in the "offline" world, considering how these data have played a fundamental role in the evolution of political and social history in recent years (Van Dijck, 2016). The political and economic results fostered the rapid trend to digitalze the business and the dynamic communication and information flows, which led those digital corporations on their way to be or already dominant on the Internet to acquire greater power and presence in the discussion and occupation in the political, economic and social spheres (Sadowski, 2020; Jiménez & Reneudeles, 2020). These business mechanisms, finally, led to the growth of the investment and profitability of those corporations, virtually causing a monopoly (Bigo et al., 2019) and the consequent government need to reduce their power through the formulation of policies and regulations that regulate their corporate decisions and commercial functionalities at the expense of users (Lyon, 2019).

Each social network that comes from those corporations is different, and they have incorporated different functionalities that are presented to the user. Thus, on Facebook, it is already the norm to be able to share any audiovisual or textual content, react to it and chat with contacts in a bidirectional communication (Paton & Irons, 2016), unlike Twitter, where

unidirectionality tends to prevail (Graham et al., 2013). Social networks modify and create sociabilities according to functionalities that the individual and the group internalize as one more alternative. According to these functionalities and despite converging sociopolitical considerations, the virtual space has endowed communication with flexibility and dynamism, since it has managed to effectively group people with similar qualities. Suddenly, the creation of friendships on the Internet became common, as well as the appearance of romance (Alonso-Ruido et al., 2015).

However, this possibility arises, in part, due to the algorithmic construct that directs the content presented, with the aim of promoting the greatest amount of user permanence on the platform (Giraldo-Luque & Fernández-Rovira, 2020). This is the development model proposed by the platform, which means that the user delivers the greatest amount of information that comes from the individual behaviour and that will be used to segment the population in terms of consumption, thus providing corporations with a series of marketing strategies and functionalities, also directed by the algorithm (Van Dijck, 2016). The algorithm, in this way, becomes the new economic model that sustains the Internet. That is to say, it is thanks to these functionalities that the user prefers to use a social network and its datafication is made possible.

The mechanism indicated is part of the so-called attention economy that was popularized by Michael Goldhaber in 1997 to describe the dynamics that he saw growing on the Internet (Festeré & Garrouste, 2015). The logic of the name derives from the fact that our attention is limited and, as decision-making is born from it, it becomes a valuable resource. Thus, the question is: How to gain the attention of the user with my information on the Internet if what is most abundant there is precisely information? Following this logic, a competitive quest for the user's attention begins, since from it, one is able to persuade (Goldhaber, 1997).

However, the term was originally coined by Thorengate Warren (1990) by extending Daniel Kahneman's interpretation of attention as "capital". Warren speaks of four related axioms in this regard: The first is related to the fact that we must pay attention in order to be informed, where we "pay" with attention to receive information and turn it into knowledge and viceversa. In other words, it requires information to be emisor and receptor, the former to generate a coherent and effective discourse, the latter in order to interpret. The second axiom says that "attention is a fixed asset", since spending it implies time that is limited to our life and obligations. The third axiom says that "attention can be divided

between people and in time", by realizing that to guide our attention to our activities we must also attend to others to opt for the best efficiency. The last and fourth axiom says that "attention is invested in the expectation of emotional returns" by saying that our attention is determined, in a significant part, by emotion as motivation. Warren proposes from there a series of critiques around the development of psychology. However, one can intuit the rescue of the axioms in Goldhaber for the analysis of the economic models of the Internet.

Therefore and given the above, the content of the Internet encourages the emotional activation of the subject to produce the maximum attention and thus consume it as much as possible. Also, the platforms themselves use reinforcers to promote permanence in them and thus promote the maximum amount of content to consume as possible (Frank, 2020). As for the algorithm, it can be called an aspect that runs through the moral discussions about the sociotechnical transformation that we are going through. To what extent should an ordered set of systematic operations govern us? To what extent should our decisions be determined by a computer? Van Dijck (2016) affirms that nowadays such programming is what determines, to some degree, what we like and what we don't, which leads to the question: Are virtual communities a solely human decision, or is it traversed by algorithm programming? If so, then, what is the responsibility of corporations around the agency and socialization capacity of individuals? Do people connect more because they want to, or are they persuaded by these platforms that dominate the Internet?

There is no answer on how it affects society, since the algorithm that determines the functioning of social networks depends on its own interaction with the social environment in semantic and behavioural terms, as well as on its own functionalities and programming. The discussion about the ethics of this mathematical functionality is a central part in the attempts to regularize its impact, because, despite all the questioning, the social is coordinated, created and represented with this technology, which gives a responsibility to those who manage it (Doneda & Almeida, 2016).

Facebook and other social networks are web pages sensitive to user preferences in real time and, therefore, do not promote, a priori, the consumption of a certain content over another, as long as it is not against the rules nor violates the legal framework or the filter that the community delivers through reports (Van Dijck, 2016). The algorithm only determines what society sees and what the individual interacts with. Thus, when viewed as a space open to all types of communities and users, it resonates

according to the desire of those who interact with it, suggesting new content that could be of interest, and filtering the content that will be visible in the "home" of each user, along with the possibility of finding communities that are of interest to the user.

This phenomenon increases while other users with similar characteristics or interests consume the same content. The same happens with the search engine incorporated in the Facebook system, which is also mediated by the processed information, to guarantee a greater probability that the results are appropriate to the interests of the user. It can be said that each social network that currently exists has a similar operation, since the business model is similar, differing according to the benefits and services it offers, as well as the corporate policies and community rules that they impose on the user (Van Dijck, 2016).

Thus, although online social networks have been profusely criticized for their data management, privacy (Sushama et al., 2021), ideological polarization and lately, for the potential for misinformation (Jost et al., 2018), its quality for creating communities has allowed diverse social groups to use it and appropriate it for collaborative purposes, since the aforementioned algorithm makes it possible.

Indeed, some authors have already mentioned the possibility that the online/offline dichotomy is somewhat diffuse insofar as what happens on one-side influences the other, since it is easy to see that technologies advance and communication capabilities improve (Papacharissi, 2005).

The subject described is one of the central axes of the popular Netflix documentary "Social Dilemma" (Orlowski, 2020) which reveals that we are not fully adapted to change, due to lack of studies, the speed in which it evolves and ethical and sociopolitical problems already mentioned, in addition to the production of a marked political polarization and the production of "echo chambers", related to some recent studies that demonstrate the phenomenon (Zhuravskaya et al., 2020). This last concept, worth explaining, means that a discourse acquires force in the place of the social network where the issuer is, reinforcing it at the expense of other disparate discourses.

It is important to reflect on this point regarding the relationship between those phenomena mentioned in the last paragraphs and virtual social networks as a structure. If we make a distinction between the results of its use and the social networks themselves, which are in effect two different things, we can understand that the characteristics of this technology work according to the use that the user gives to it, which allows us to ask:

Are we socially educated to its use? In that sense, how they will affect us depends on how they are used. It is therefore necessary to know their negative and positive effects to achieve a use hand in hand to a social appropriation of them.

It is argued, then, that social networks have characteristics that cannot be reduced to an analysis of social dynamics, nor is there a space that privileges the private conglomerate even when it is the channel through which it obtains profits. It is, ultimately, a space where there is sufficient freedom to be able to observe an important heterogeneity of communities, since that is the quality by which it is nourished.

Twitter, if you want to identify a difference of community applicability between social networks, represents an interesting example on how to produce contrast around the possibility of creating strategic information about communities; therefore, given its unidirectional communication and the reduced space to deliver messages, the possibility of an effective dialogue is less compared to other social networks. However, the dynamics that occur inside are useful in relation to the metadata of the production of relevant information, both for the company and for research, in such a way that it is possible to carry out emotional probes in a population (Mostafa et al., 2021), as well as the possibility of trying to predict demographic mobility (Comito, 2018) and supporting the analysis of crimes (Sandagiri et al., 2020).

YouTube, on the other hand, is a social network that has been facing public and academic observation due to the use of its algorithm and corporate policies that, it is argued, are undermining freedom of expression, since the algorithm privileges content with certain features to promote larger advertising space, having effects on the visibility given by it and, therefore, effects on the population and content creators, who have to adapt their videos to generate sufficient profitability to be economically sustainable (Pedersen, 2019). Questions arise because, if initially YouTube was destined to share videos, where is that philosophy currently? In some way, the market possessed the social bases that initially marked the path of this website.

The most representative example of community dynamics can be seen on Reddit, a popular social[1] network that has generated a line of studies on its use by "Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders" (AAPI) as a form of

[1] For more, please go to the page profile of the author, Bryan Donoso: https://dl.acm.org/profile/88158835957.

decolonization and resilience (Donoso & Semaan, 2020), social support and collective actions (Donoso, 2018). Even when the sense of community is part of the said platform, there is a tendency for it to decrease as more people enter it because participation begins to be less equitable. The degree of participation tends to be monopolized by a small percentage of users, more than anything because of the visibility produced by "upvotes or downvotes", which are concentrated by the popular users precisely because of their activity (Panek et al., 2018).

Returning to the conceptualization of the community, the initial definition has to deal with all the communicational and experiential specificities of sociability anchored in a technological platform, its consequent structures, norms and provisions.

Unlike traditional communities, in digital communities, individuals, by integrating, deposit the image of each user in the information available on the platform. The information that is delivered in the signing of the agreement that is requested when entering may vary according to the level and quality of interaction that the subject performs with it, which implies the aesthetic, discursive and historical exposure that the user confers to, which is reflected as a trail. To a greater or lesser extent, depending on the configuration available in relation to privacy, the above results in the construction of the representation that other users have of the individual who uploads that information. On the other hand, there seems to be a "perpetual assistance" in the sense that it is not required to be literally in the social space to be there. It is a kind of "absent presence" as Gergen described it. Due to their quality of lack of face-to-face interaction and deviation from personal interaction, they cause negative effects on communication. However, it can be postulated that social networks create complementary sociabilities that do not necessarily replace them (Sabater et al., 2017; Fernández et al., 2015). This "absent presence" can also be understood as a "relationship power", in the sense that it promotes a first contact with people who have characteristics conducive to friendship proper of having needs, motivations and configurations similar to the individual behind the user, without having to fight unrestrictedly with the structure of the traditional social network.

Exposure to the public is a possibility that is always present and that is part of the structure of the network, as can be seen in the social network Tinder, in which you can access the chat and get an appointment with people with whom you have tastes in common, or among those who have mutually selected each other. Communities formed by shared interests or

motivations are already a first step in this regard; suddenly there are instances of convergence when the activity is organized, as can be seen in the encounters that the *youtubers* facilitate with their followers, the e-sport events or "coffee lectures" of some intellectual community.

Although for some authors it is a source of criticism when referring to virtual communities as such (Montero, 2004), the ability to select on the networks what we want to show can have positive effects on the exhibition and, consequently, on the confession of what you want to communicate. Written platforms eliminate certain variables of the social that can be anxious in the individual and, in parallel, create other instances of security. As it is not determined by time, the reflection of the message or the decision-making about launching into the exhibition can be long and slow, promoting a dynamic more suitable for self-declaration, that is, the ability to speak from a position of vulnerability in so much as the self (identity) is not affected. The same happens with who responds, while social pressures to do so decrease.

The above assumes that what is shared in the community can be heard by all its members, which confers a status of exposure assumed by the user while one shares the entire group. Depending on the community, this characteristic acquires different consequences. A relevant one is the one alluded to in the present work: the tendency to tolerance, empathy and listening (Gupta & Schapira, 2018), unlike those of political discussion where ideology and its passion derivatives tend to cause conflicts between users (Harel et al., 2020).

However, we cannot reduce all types of communities to just one type of analysis. They can be divided, if you like, into those provided by an institution and those that are born from the society itself for itself (Porter, 2017). The first mentioned communities, which are the ones that concern this writing, tend to have an organization derived from the intentions that the facilitator proposes and, therefore, have a dynamic directed towards a particular end. In this way, it is understood that there is, to some degree, a unidirectional top-down communication in terms of information handover. It does not mean that the bidirectional or peer communication is limited, since in effect, they are part of a community by definition; however, it is emphasized that this top-down communication is an important and, in many cases, fundamental quality.

Such is the case of the groups destined to accompany the processes derived from cancer treatment, in which the said form of communication fights against the misinformation that exists regarding the disease, and it

provides affective support for the patient and his or her close circle (Gupta & Schapira, 2018). In other words, a virtual community arises from a psychosocial need to counteract the large number of miraculous treatments and false causative explanations that surround the disease, due to the fears and torments that can be experienced before that diagnosis and because of the need for an information centre that encourages peace of mind when you do not know how to deal with the medical and psychological complications that arise from it.

Social Networks as Community: The Case of Volar Chile

> *The Global Network is a sad fraud because everything is already interconnected. The important thing is to charge those less travelled tracks with pioneering impulses and make them manifest on this side of reality. Reanimate the total flow of Gran Vía.* (…said the monk "Amamanta", in http://www.artfutura.org/99/dijo.htm)

It is in this sense that online communities, despite being involved in a platform, a priori corporate, generate resistance practices in the face of sociocultural aspects derived from the vicissitudes of life in the natural, psychosocial or mercantilist.

The latter is thought of as a sociopolitical system derived from radical liberal traditions, tending to promote the privatization of public interest institutions, including those that sustain the life of the individual and the community. In this sense, their dynamics becomes determined by the sensitivity of the market to detect and satisfy social needs on the condition that the balance of supply and demand is sustainable, that is, that the costs involved in satisfying the society's demands are at a point that can be paid for by it. Otherwise, the benefits decrease to promote greater accessibility, which can be argued for some goods and services; but it is not viable in all, especially those that are mentioned initially: those that sustain life.

In the case of health services in Chile, they are enshrined as a fundamental right, so the state provides a mixed system; that is, it gives the citizen the possibility of choosing one of two systems: public or private. However, by the beginning of 2021, it is barely expected that 18.24% of the population will be occupying the private sector, which leaves the vast majority (81.76%)

in the hands of public health. The current consensus regarding the cause of the phenomenon is the high costs that the private system entails for the customer which makes the implicit social inequality visible. In addition, the annexed public health system has a series of shortcomings, even when there are studies that suggest otherwise.

To understand it, it must first be contextualized that the Chilean public health system has cost/benefit as one of the axes of the framework to consider. This supposes a system that tends to maximize the efficacy for the treatment of the disease, that is, to achieve the best result with the least possible investment. On the other hand, since the 1990s, the public system had to carry out a restructuring that implied encompassing a biopsychosocial approach to the disease, thus having to take responsibility for variables that went beyond the context of the office. This requirement contrasts with the economic reality of the sector, while state spending for its coverage is close to 8.5% of GDP (OECD, 2017), which results in a deficit of hospital infrastructure and much of that existing in bad conditions (Goic, 2015). Comparatively, this amount assumes that Chile invests less than half the per capita average of the OECD in health, (OECD, 2017). For this reason, the mere organizational readjustment of the public service supposes promoting certain aspects of health at the expense of others, in order to achieve better "efficiency".

This is observed in the low salary and unfavourable working conditions within the public system, which translates into a low rate of health professionals (OECD, 2017; Goic, 2015) and a consequent emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, burnout and eventually the perception of impersonal treatment by the patient (OECD, 2017; Goic, 2015).

Therefore, even when the Chilean system considers a biopsychosocial model in formal terms, the resources and structures of the public service do not help to promote it. This has the observed consequences that 67.50% of its users rate the care negatively, there are difficulties in accessing care, and only 45.50% of the population feels economically protected in their health system (Aravena & Inostroza, 2015). Thus, it is not difficult to justify the demand for the social outbreak of 2019, also known as the "30 peso rebellion", which demands a better health system. The need for a mechanism that can produce alternative solutions for the health problems of a system that tends to favour mercantilization is thus imperative.

Part of this solution is the incorporation of the community in health processes, which becomes complicated due to a series of aspects that characterize the Chilean population: little understanding around the development of the public health (OECD, 2019), low political participation per se and historical distrust of public institutions (Araujo & Martuccelli, 2020) on the part of the population: social support is preferable over institutional support (Araujo & Martuccelli, 2020).

Therefore, we return to the consideration of virtual communities. In the context of public health in Chile virtual spaces tends to promote an accompaniment away from the institutions, in which the possibility of informing, accompanying and supporting from a collective sense, emerges. It is a space of solidarity between citizens that ensures the protection of life as resistance (Dobles & Arroyo, 2020), in the face of an unequal health system of a liberal nature, which holds the individual himself responsible for his fate (Adams et al., 2019) and that causes the sense of community to gradually diminish (Honneth, 1991; Adams et al., 2019).

Social networks transformed into communities act as a pole of resistance against this inequality because, in virtuality, the physical space is equitable and the interaction modulated only by what is possible and allowed, according to the benefits of the platform, prevails. They are all the same; they are users.

In this way, virtual communities linked to complex health conditions lead to *social action*, in the critical cultural sense that emerges from an unequal liberal system and in the deficiency in the fulfilment of the "health guarantees". In order for face-to-face meetings to occur, individuals must be able to move freely to the meeting place with the time and timely knowledge of when the meetings will take place, which is often made more complex by the same lack of health or excessive work. Virtuality, then, can be a meeting point that welcomes communities that cannot leave home due to a disabling condition, those who suffer the voracity of everyday life in the face of time, those who are not represented in thought and action in the place they occupy in the "offline" social network. In this virtuality, a citizen movement arises that eventually agglomerates voices, thoughts and sensations regarding what convoques them. Thus, they are a scene in movement where it is possible to think the community as an organization with agency for promoting self-determination, mobilization and eventually the search for collective well-being, for psychosocial well-being (Fuente et al., 2010).

The interesting thing is to see that, eventually, history and institutionalization, at times coercive—normally exercised by the moderator—of the virtual community, born from the social bases for a purpose, is at the service and protection of an original need, promoting organic growth and eventually listening and reception beyond the margins of virtuality. Virtual networks, in this sense, promote the organization of those who, by traditional frameworks, depend on the organization of others. Perhaps a clear example could be Reddit with its various platforms that promote community support around illness, drug addiction, obesity and so on (Choudhury & De, 2014; O'Neill, 2018).

The virtual community productions can be read as those instances of identity updating; saying that "there are others like me" promotes implicit accompaniment, even in a symbolic role with norms that promote the maintenance of established dynamics, support between peers and perceived filiation in everyday life, not only in the moment where the individual becomes a user but in the continuity of daily life as long as it is certain that the community will be there every time the mobile phone or computer is checked (Carter, 2005). With this, these spaces that were born from the capitalist dynamics propitiate a method to alleviate the deficiencies that the same model generated.

Now, how can virtual communities derive the psychosocial support of subjects with chronic limiting diseases? The case study that deals with this has as a context the virtual community Volar Chile, made up of people with rheumatoid arthritis as a health condition.

This is a chronic autoimmune disease of an inflammatory type and an unknown cause that compromises the joints, destroying their structure through erosion and association with deformations, although it can also affect other organs (González et al., 2015). This chronic condition has a significant impact on the generation of disability, while between 33 and 40% of those affected show a reduction in their work capacity between the first and third year of onset of the disease (Macedo et al., 2009). It eventually results in skeletal muscle disability when there is no good therapeutic effect. It affects, on average, individuals over the age of 50 (González et al., 2015), although its presence is evident from childhood, causing family involvement (Carbonell et al., 2017). Rheumatoid arthritis generates stress in primary relationships due to its consequences on independence, especially when the affected person is young (Zhang et al., 2015).

Efforts to find psychological aspects related to rheumatoid arthritis reveal some differences in the patients' perception of themselves, in

personality traits related to emotion that can lead to fatigue and stress in some cases. On the other hand, there are a series of factors related to the diagnosis that lead to anxiety, depression and an increase in the perception of pain in patients, among others. Among the most prominent of these factors are the initial emotional state, support networks, social stress, perception of self-control and level of optimism (Scharloo et al., 1999; Mancuso et al., 2006), as well as the level of education about the disease in the environment of people with this condition (Werner et al., 2006).

Based on the above, it is possible to determine that rheumatoid arthritis can be considered of multidimensional and psychosocial concern, as we will see in the study "Volar Chile: Virtual Community as social support for a better quality of life in women with Rheumatoid Arthritis" (Canales et al., 2020), a research work whose focus is to study the said community as a social network for support and social support for those who suffer from the disease.

The literature points to *social support* as a social dynamic that improves physical and mental health and cushions the negative effects of a disease (Bajat, 2016). It is possible to find studies that place it as a factor that promotes quality of life while promoting rehabilitation (Rodríguez et al., 1993) and that also seeks to improve personal capacities to cope with the disease and search for achievement of goals. Both translate into the need to provide stability to the psychological and physical integrity of the individual over time through an "interpersonal transaction".

Vega describes that social support has different perspectives, which makes it an important multidimensional concept to review to understand its operation in the virtual community. It can be derived as "emotional support", as it promotes self-esteem, affection and security; as an "instrumental support", insofar as it supposes material and concrete help in the face of problems; and also as "evaluative support", since from here the feeling tends to be produced that there is someone to turn to in the event of any problem or mishap, as well as the feeling that one is important to someone else. Finally, there is the "informational support", through which the subject acquires advice to face the complications of their disease.

Social support tends to be promoted from communities, social networks and trusted people, while from them emotional ties and belonging are generated (Lin, 1986). On the other hand, understanding that social

support starts from a third party and has interference in the subject, in the interpretation and coping with the psychosocial and psychological phenomena related to their illness; it has a key dimension in the responsibility it entails. Its implementation is not exempt from setbacks when the person who gives the support transmits more concern than calm, when he gives erroneous or harmful information or does not manage to understand the entire context in which the subject is involved, sometimes causing opposite effects to those desired (Rodríguez et al., 1993).

From a community perspective, in the health context, support is derived from the reciprocal relationship inscribed in the culture that colours that space that is constructed discursively through the sharing of experiences, emotions and stories related to the disease (Donoso, 2004).

The virtual community "Volar Chile" has been studied through interviews, focus groups and observation during the year 2020. Belonging to the Corporation Pro Aid to the Rheumatic Patient "Volar", the community currently has 9.9 thousand members on its page of private Facebook and was created on August 8, 2008 (Volar Chile Rheumatoid Arthritis, n.d.).

In relation to the experiences gathered in the study, the three actions that are most valued in the community are the information that is passed on in order to educate those who suffer from the disease; support in the beginning, that is, when the diagnosis is first acquired and the patient requires the ability to perceive that there are more people who suffer from the same thing, thus generating a sense of company. This, in general, is related to why people initially arrive there; as there is a tendency to have feelings that are related to the inability to deal with the disease, anxiety and anguish due to the symptoms, in addition to wrong beliefs that derive from said anguish and the lack of information. Thus, statements such as:

> [when asked why he/she decided to join the community]: "*Above all for support and sharing experiences, because most people cannot understand or do not have someone to turn to*"

Which is shared/common to experiences like:

> *I also arrived* [to the community] *like that, I didn't know anything, I was very desperate and didn't know nothing, I communicated with Ruth, who is the Foundation president and she invited me to a meeting*
>
> *Yes, with her* [referring to a conversation with the community manager], *because we belong to this group, along with Jane, we are both Ruth's group and*

I explained her evrything, with desperation, that I didn't knew anything about it… why this and that?, why did I have to take those pills (…). (E3)

In fact, along this study you can find a series of experiences related with the same phenomenon of "desperation" that can take the shape of anxiety, anguish, sadness or anger. So it can be observed that:

"[When asked about the learning acquired through the community]: "*You can mainly learn to fight, to search for options, because many people* believing *the fact that "nothing can be done, nothing can be done, nothing can be done", but then there is the people that is always suggesting to search for options*". (E2)

The phenomenon described acquires particular relevance when the health systems cannot fulfil certain standards about the treatment of the disease, either because of long waiting lists for a medical appointment or because of the low number of rheumatoid specialist MDs.

In Santiago [Capitol city] *there is a lot of coverage, but in the countryside [inner land provinces of Chile], there is none; but that is due to the lack of* [rheumatoid MD] *specialists, because, for example, there was only one Rheumatologist here in Chillan and he is originally from Concepcion* [a big city located in Chile's south], *so he came, just for a few days and when the pandemics started and he was gone and never returned.* (E4)

In the same way, it turns important when the main networks of support for patients is not conscientious about the complexities that it brings along, neither the effects on the individual, as:

(…) *above all in the support and in the fact that you are not alone* [referring to the contribution of the community], *because many times, of course my parents know me and they know about my disease, but many times they don't understand the context.* (E2)

(…) *you feel lonely, you think that you are the only one, you don't feel understood, because they say things… you know what? it hurts and my family doesn't believe me, at some point someone didn't believe, they thought that the pain was not that much, they couldn't imagine that you cannot handle a fork (…).* (E3)

(…) *I don't know… there is a person that says dunno "you know I'm just beginning, what can I do? Because there is lots of people that comes desperate in pain*

or due to limitations and I somehow, as a health professional, try to view it as if no treatment or therapy is magic, everything requires time, steadiness, hard work (…). (E2)

This is an example of how the community inserted in a complicated context for those who are experiencing the disease, covers a psychosocial aspect where at times people perceive incomprehension. This aspect turns into a central element of cohesion and sense of community. This function develops with responsibility when the manager's labour is to watch over ordered space and respect for the norms inside the community. In fact, that is one of the reasons why the group is closed and the rules forbid certain actions like pharmacological recommendations.

In the same way, managers are perceived as proactive when they have to handle rule breaking episodes inside the virtual space, calling the attention of the community and applying sanctions if the wrong behaviours persist. On the other hand, the same community have health professionals that provide useful science-based information through publications, talks and informative meetings:

(…) *Volar Chile* (…) *she is characterized for the talks she gives, for informing patients, so they* (patients) *ideally remain well informed, that is the goal (…).* (E1)

There is Jannette, Maria Ina and Ruth, they are constantly trying to delete all that stuff, they try to delete, filter [inappropriate or wrong comments] *(…).* (E3)

Another important factor is companionship among them. One of the many things that bind them with each other is exactly the disease they suffer, so does their experience in personal and social terms. Somehow, the fact of participating in a community is perceived as companionship and belonging:

(…) *it emotionally helps to know that you are not he only one who is sick, there are lots of people who has this disease and not only in adults but also young people, even kids.… so it helps you with this, in the emotional side, to know that there are many enduring this disease.* (E3)

The stories analysed reveal a constant speech about the capacity of the community to welcome a common thinking, to experience empathy, that

is categorized as a safe space to talk about emotions, when the symptoms of the disease are overwhelming. Through these collective experiences an "absent witness" can be observed: you are not forced to interact; just the number of participants of the community has the positive effect of companionship:

In this way, Volar Chile promotes communication and the capacity to work for the common wellness, when:

> (…) *Most publications regarding the emotional side, conceive it mainly when they are sad or feel afraid, enraged, or limited.* (E2)

A perception of common wellness expands beyond the traditional bonding space offered, from different cities that converge to the same place, without an apparent difference beside the disease. There can be conflicts that arise from judgements made by certain users anchored in beliefs that come from their own experiences with the disease and the psychosocial conditions related to it. Nonetheless, there is an effort to be there and support among the users that suffer and had suffered the same:

> *What happens is that, in the [web]page… when they are sad they can feel listened, read, understood.* (E1)

There solidarity arises: the capacity to help each other in search for a better way, in the joint search of the best rheumatologist, the counselling inside or the time shared assisting [support] the suffering one, seeking for better pathways to economic coverage of this expensive disease:

> (…) *I often see, from the members, hum, is a* 'disease effects' *or recommendations about a certain MD specialist, just trying to ask for help on what is happening to you and how can they help and which MDs they know, where are the clinics nearby, that is what I have seen* (…). (E4)

In that joined learning process, those who have more experience share their knowledge with the ones living in the adjustment process of learning to live with a chronic disease, and those who have training in health matters share knowledge about symptoms and signature signs of the disease, especially those producing psychosocial impairment.

The study describes Flying through Chile as a collective with the capacity to guide the ones starting their disease experience and to support those

who are exhausted with malaise. Flying through Chile is the social support that couldn't be found under other circumstances.

(…) *The social networks will help you to realize that you are not the only one, that there are extensive support networks in the fact that if you have a question, it can be answered by the older members, to the ones that are just starting, she said that they themselves will be able to help the others with what you have lived, so that is how I got into the social networks* (…). (E3)

(…) *people do not understand, they cannot comprehend that you have that pain, that maybe you woke up today and you couldn't stand up, so that is what is useful about this group, in helps that there are many people talking and saying, they all share the same pain that you have, then you can show that to your relatives, just by the fact that you have it in the face* [Facebook], *your relatives can see the comments and they can better understand that the pain you are feeling is real, that is not a lie.* (E3)

The support also translates into delivery of truly responsible information, with the certainty that each disease affects each individual in a specific manner, even though there are certain common characteristics. Therefore, there is a strong tendency to advice, to consult with the corresponding MD specialist or to use alternative general actions known to help with dealing with stressing or exhausting characteristics of the disease, among which you can find having a positive attitude, taking care of sleeping time, stress handling, having patience, having healthy food choices and so on. Of note, the propagation of wrong information not supported by science like YouTube videos or alternative medicines is not completely eliminated from the community, but there is a constant fight against it, in an common effort from users and managers. Moreover, in the space of such shared responsibility, proper information opportunities arise.

(…) *personally, hum, what happened often is the talks, many education talks, that is what we devoted a lot of work in Flying* [through Chile], *the talks.* (E1)

(…) *what I do is that I rarely write in there, in the post or comments, almost never, I always talk to a particular person by Messenger, right away; if that person is wrong about something, talk to her directly, that's the best way* (…). (E1)

Even though there is disinformation among users, the interaction that arises from the organizing institution itself is, in fact, safe in terms of

certainty of the quality, that way promoting loyalty to the community. Of course, the characteristic short lifespan of social network interactions does not promote that kind of relationship among all 9000 users within the community, which ultimately depends on the decisions made. The active community knows that it is proclaimed to recall participation and involvement of all users.

There is an inclusive space for those who want to speak and the people that won't but can identify him/herself with the speech. The possibility of common well-being exists, beyond the exposure frontier:

> *(…) I read everything that comes out and I compare it to what's happening to me, that way I analyse myself (…).* (E4)

> *(…) I read a lot, I participate; I mean I don't know if I participate, but I do read a lot, all the pages about people's experiences, you learn from the other person, firstly because, for all those who start with this, this is bad and if you ask and if you don't read, you won't be informed. So for some it is not good and you think that you're going through the worst, the most terrible, but when you share with another it can be seen that what you have might be less than what the other has (…).* (E5)

The fact that the community is a virtual one is practical feature for those who cannot move. Arthritis rheumatoid is often immobilizing, to a certain point. Participating actively in the recollection of experiences and information in dealing with the illness is reduced precisely due to this fact. In that sense, for this our case in particular, virtuality is a viable option; especially lately, with the pandemic, and even before in the country, the vial complications due to the so-called social outbreak to a large degree have made face-to-face encounters impossible.

So, there's a sensation of gratitude with the communal space found in Volar Chile. The people who actively participate in it declare an improvement in their relation to the illness and, finally, in their lives. Not just because of the information and the shelter it supposes but also because bonds of friendship and affection are established. Many of the active members know each other, share experiences, moments and eventually a relation of companionship:

> *Look, the community is tightly untied, but at the same time, the problem with it is that on Facebook you can't give, donate or ask for meds.* (E3)

Yes, I have recommended the community [Volar Chile] a lot, especially when I go to the hospital, because it is the way of… how can I put it, because my whole process has been related to it, there you will realize that there are many people, not just you, it's that, it is recommendable, I recommend it. (E3)3

Once exposed the knowledge and experiences circulating in the virtual health community Volar Chile, it is hard not to refer to the characteristics of a community. Social support becomes visible when pain or impotence due to this illness is communicated, when the collective gives encouragement and promotes a positive view for the future. Virtual community Volar Chile embodies the "absent presence": there is a word in potency to be rescued, no matter who it is from, where it is from and when it cames. In some way that absent presence forges reciprocity: everyone is equal as base members of the community Volar Chile; people with a rheumatoid illness. Such solidary feeling sustains and creates movement: concern towards the one who suffers and the consequent action, visible needs and answers that stems from empathy.

From this study one cannot extract conflicts that do not refer to the beliefs related with "I think that this is the best for our illness", since the biggest difficulty perceived is the responsibility in the transfer of information.

From there people work towards an end in which the maximum expression is attained in a solidarity that eventually, in the exchange of experiences and help, turns into a fraternity fostered by the very same circumstances, in defying the individuals to confront situations that will command resilience. It is not something that the whole community can enjoy, but the rapport between those who have been able to enjoy the communal experience has installed them in relations with meaning that they will always remember.

What happens is that since we know each other, because generally we relate during the talks and there we forge friendship ties; with another lady who passed away about three weeks ago, I had a beautiful bond, with Marianita. (…) She died and we shared a lot with her, with Ruth [group admin] and well, with them all and it was very sad, you see… it was sad, that she was gone, but she is resting already, Marianita. (…) So (unfinished) but you see, bonds are made, I have others, well almost all my friends are old ladies (laughs). (E1)

In that sense, there is community in Volar Chile when there is union and the efforts are one. There is community when they organize towards an end and consider themselves belonging to the community Volar Chile; one can observe a digital scene that stages the reciprocity and gift that nurtures the collective and turns it into an affective field, which is central for coping with a complex health condition.

Reciprocity is one of the concepts that permit closing and expanding the discussion between community and social networks because it is a fundamental principle that articulates the dialogue between the social and the economic, from a historical perspective that acknowledges and identifies utilitarianism as the dominant moral philosophy of modernity, and that it is possible to transcend it. Latin-American thought has managed to own and systematize practices in these sense, by way of fundamental ideas from economic anthropology: the idea of reciprocity from Marcel Mauss and the idea of gratitude from K. Polanyi's oeuvre. Both authors pretend, and succeed in, disarticulating the hegemony of the instrumental economic logic, without denying it or criticizing it, but through the development of a *historical beyond* that configures a meta-utilitarian philosophy, that results in a fundament for social and solidarity economy (SSE).

Utilitarianism is the philosophy that gives sense to the practices of the new bourgeois social class that emerged between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, that freed the human being from the Manichean notions of good and evil, of supreme justice, of global metaphysics and the natural right. Utilitarianism is part of a historical "do-gooder individualism", since it defends the idea that the search for individual happiness will inaugurate the greatest degree of happiness for all the rest, if everyone does the same. From here it is understood that the human being is freed from religious determinism, but losing in some way the "social bond", thus refuting out condition of interdependence. In sum, the historical step fulfilled by the philosophy of utilitarianism is the gain of freedom and loss of interdependence. Or the loss of interdependence in the wake of freedom.[2]

[2] The canonic declaration of Mill's utilitarianism can be found in his book *Utilitarianism*. This philosophy has a long tradition, and Mill's contribution is influenced mainly by Jeremy Bentham and his father, James Mill. Mill suggests in that text that utility has to be conceived in relation with humanity "as a progressive being" that includes the development and exercise of the rational capacity by which we make an effort to accomplish a "superior mode of existence". The famous formulation of Mill about utilitarianism is known as the "greatest-happiness principle". It sustains that one should always act in order to do the most happiness

The idea of the "binding perspective" as basic condition of the social brings identity and confidence. From here it is possible to see that the circulation of goods and services of the modern world is not worth just its utility (value of use) or its price (value of exchange) but because they create and feed the interpersonal relation (value of bond). The gift is the rector of life in society and is articulated in the relation give-receive-give back. From this lecture it is possible to pose a de-commodifying question: "What keeps us from giving more?", making it clear that "the gift", "the present", is the logic that keeps us united. According to Gaiguer, L. (2017) the dominant idea of a Homo Economicus is founded on principles that differentiate the economy of solidarity by identifying, analysing, describing and theorizing for a Market Society: "*the utilitarian vision of the world does not consider that, even before the subjects can satisfy their necessities and calculate their interests, it is precise that they exist and constitute themselves as such, as much if we're talking about individuals and collectives*". This construction of subjectivity relates to the subordination of the necessity to the requirement of meaning (for the individual and for the collective). It implies a subordination of the utilitarian considerations to an "anti-utilitarian constituent moment", says Caillé (2009) in his book *Anti-utilitarianism*, which Gaiguer (2017) manages to transcend with the idea of meta-utilitarianism that we are collecting in this work to problematize the relation of social networks as communities.

We propose desegregating the different forms of social organization that are at the base of the economy to incorporate a historical vision that breaks the idea that commerce is always operated from instrumental thought. Reciprocity has to be considered in a restrictive meaning, identifiable with one of the principles of the economic act, that alludes to the presence of symmetric groupings, nurturing forms of mutualism that are institutionalized (Gaiguer, 2017). At the same time, "reciprocity" has an incidence on the other principles of economic behaviour: on the habit of valuing freedom among equals; on the self-interest, by contesting the symmetry in the exchange relations and introducing bonding principles of

for the most people, within reason. The biggest contribution of Mill to utilitarianism is his argument for the qualitative separation of pleasures. Bentham deals every form of happiness as equal, while Mill sustains that intellectual and moral pleasures are superior to the more physical forms of pleasure. The utilitarian doctrine affirms that happiness is desirable and the only desirable end as such, everything else being desirable only as a means to this end. The historical step rescued by Gaiguer fulfills the philosophy of utilitarianism: freedom is gained and interdependence is lost.

value; on the obligation, by stimulating the conscientious and voluntary implication in favour of the common good.

With reciprocity it is possible to answer the critic to capitalism, referring to the destruction of the social relations, the degradation of the human habitat and, even, the aesthetic impoverishment of the daily life. Due to its initiatives, the SSE again raises the essential sentiment of responsibility of "humans with humans" (Polanyi, 2012).

In sum, "the SSE corresponds to the promotion of the reciprocity principle inside of an axiology that is not anti, but meta-utilitarian, whose specific configurations and qualities must be examined case by case. From a general point of view, the SSE values the diner relations typical of the familiar and domestic economy, but shows its limits when structuring initiatives founded on mutually consented relations in the democratic way. It does not reject the calculus of self interest and the relations of exchange for the simple fact that they are stripped of any intention of creating bonds—since such relations are functional at that, besides preserving the individuality of the negotiating or agreeing parts—but does not universalize them" (Gaiguer, 2017, p. 101).

Virtual communities open up a field that makes it possible to transcend instrumental relations. Gauger named it, in sum, a meta-utilitatism of the solidary and social economy, in which this possibility of going beyond the instrumental and/or utilitarian is consolidated. The meta-utilitarianism of the SSE resided, in the first place, in denying the thesis of unique rationality or the existence of an intrinsically superior model. Its practices attest the multiplicity, the constant compositions among fundaments and modes of action that are "inseparable from things and souls". Going back to Polanyi (2012), meta-utilitarianism advocates the substitution of the market as the sole vector of economic integration and the instauration of other forms of commerce.

Opening for a Closing

Hell of the living is not something to come; there is one, the one that already exists here, the hell that we inhabit every day, that we form together. There are two ways not to suffer it. The first is easy for many: accept hell and become part of it to the point of no longer seeing it. The second is risky and requires attention and continuous learning: seek and know who and what, in the middle of hell, is not hell, and make it last, and leave room for it.

—Italo Calvino in Invisible Cities

From here an analysis of virtuality was outlined, virtuality understood as a supraterritory that overlaps the physical environment of the communities and reconfigures the social fabric in the exercise of the development of sociabilities from and for virtuality. Virtuality allows for forms of socialization of the physical environment and that at the same time produces emerging social and community ways of life, in which social relations can only be understood based on their own logic of thought and action.

According to Maffesoli, within post-industrial society, with growing urbanization and the consequent segregation, identities lose their roots in one place and different *affective communities* are generated. This affective communities give foot to a series of social norms different from those given in the space-time configuration. The change that is operating as a result of the innovations in the information and communication technologies of the network society leads us to rethink these two categories of socio-natural ordering: space and time. The society that is built is organized in networks and interdependent cells rather than in hierarchical gears, which characterized modernity. The phenomenon described causes a transformation of the classic spatial and temporal references, given the abundance, variety, diversity and instant access to the informational and relational universe.

Currently, a culture of complexity is emerging that adopts systemic, non-linear, multidimensional and dynamic thinking as new references. Thus, new activities related to digital life appear that have a strong social demand and make us rethink the relationship with time, mainly in the social, work and leisure spheres. Work time, previously an element of social integration, is losing its prominence to time devoted to leisure as a new element of social cohesion.

Time today is simultaneous and synchronous, immediate, the here and now, in a non-spatial territory but imagined and lived as a new space. In this way, the lived public space disappears and is replaced by a new digital territory where new forms of relationship take place. Technologies thus generate social interaction networks focused on a common interest of their participants and allow for the configuration of new identities. The new techno-industrial subjectivity manages a multiple, multiform, relational, fragmented and contextual identity that is negotiated in the multiple social relationships it establishes (Cabruja, 1998).

Is an alternative discourse possible from social psychology? Our opinion is that, yes, things in social science are not always black and white and statistics, trends in action and majority discourse do not have to always be

the truth. Communicative interactions and human relationships occur at multiple levels and can be analysed from different points of view, while at the same time acquiring—also as collective action—new functionalities through contemporary media.

Volar Chile consumers and users are also producers of extremely diffuse, uncontrollable, silent and almost invisible forms. In this line of argument, which is neither technophobic nor technophilic, an attempt is made to challenge the binary intellectual shortcut that separates the knowledge and experiences that flow and articulate an online/offline social space. Domestication does not only mean uncritical adoption but personalization, the customization of the technological identity. The blurred line between the concept of technological producer/consumer opens up rational, logical and oriented courses of action and symbolization, liminal not yet institutionalized. This work shows some notes on possible alternatives to the institutional dichotomous approach—by approaching the multiplicity of options and the everyday social life—with its rational and logical; emotional and passionate, contextual, practical dimensions. Digital collectivities open the meaning of thinking about a politics of inhabiting, where they themselves are the scenario and field for the construction of relationships and identities, beyond ordering/governing.

In relation to solidarity and common economies, it becomes strategic to see how a collaborative and globalized Internet culture lost ground, being colonized by the competitive entrepreneurial culture that in many settings has been ignoring and making the power of collaboration for human development invisible. It is necessary to once again establish a certain suspicion about the relationships between the various actors that make up the digitized society in terms of revealing barriers that boycott collaboration when zero-sum competition is established. The capitalist economic system is organized around the concept of private property. In this scenario, every time you share a material good, you necessarily lose it or at least you must part with it. In other words, sharing a physical asset implies being willing to give it up and get rid of it. However, in the world of digital intangibles, the prevailing paradigm is just the opposite. In the knowledge and innovation economy, intangible assets have a characteristic that makes them unique: they can be shared without their owner losing possession of them. If knowledge is shared, I continue to keep it intact, while those who acquire it increase their intellectual heritage. This can also be understood from the meta-utilitarianism of the social solidarity economy as the articulating principles of the relationship between economy

and society are present in our primary forms of organization in the domestic and in the historical.

There is a contradiction between the desire to push social transformations and the formulation of a research problem from a specific virtual community or case study. However "If we and our knowledge are part of reality, if reality is as it is because we, including our knowledge, are as we are, then, when we add elements to our knowledge and change it, we are also changing reality (…) knowing is not, therefore, defining reality as it is; it is building it in a different way, that is, modifying it" (Ibañez, 2000).

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CHAPTER 10

From Virtual Communities to Research on Virtuality: Emerging Concepts and Research Challenges—Ethnographic Research in the Digital Age

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In 1945, *El Aleph*, the paradigmatic tale by Jorge Luis Borges, was published for the first time; in 1956, the book *End of the Game and Other Stories* by Julio Cortázar with the story Axólotl was published. On can be placed a subtle relationship between that two tales: the obsession with the virtual, the virtual as a bond, and at the same time the possibility of being absorbed, swallowed by that unattainable translucent virtual bond. That human obsession, it could be said, now returns with virtual networks through the internet and mobile devices.

One of the most critical challenges for contemporary social psychology has undoubtedly been incorporating into its studies the effects of new information and communication technologies on what was called "psychosocial". This challenge is due to the impact of these technologies and

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the change they represent for contemporary culture and societies and the subversion that it provoked in what was understood until not long ago by psychosocial phenomena. Thus, collective subjectivity—already in itself a form of virtuality—now reappears due to the ties in virtual spaces (Machin, 2020).

What is the living (ζωον) human?[1] And in particular, are their networks and their links causing their condition or an effect of it? These are some of the questions that we will approach tangentially in this chapter. Still, in particular, we will try to articulate the hypothesis that *virtuality is a condition and, at the same time, the effect of the human*: without the possibility of virtualizing, there would be no way to become human, without the ability to substitute something real for something virtual, representative of oneself, what we understand as a living human would not be such. At the same time, this possibility generated the virtualization of the real world to unsuspected points. As a result of this virtualization, phenomena would appear that are its effect but at the same time signs of the unexplored limits of this possibility: the infinite realization of the human and the *pathos* resulting from this, the necessary perversion of this process. This virtualization appears simultaneously as a result of otherness, of the social bond, and other conditions of the human, as a living entity and, like virtualization, it is also its effect.

Thus, if the extension of "virtual" as a human possibility generated the wide range of the virtual, with effects such as art, religion or the social imagery itself,[2] the extension of human "bond", forged networks and communities,[3] the combination of both possibilities, virtualization and the social bond, has generated infinite expressions of virtual bonds, networks and communities, before technology. Still, that technology has undoubtedly come to push it beyond all explored limits.

Several of the main milestones of this virtualization of the social bond will be illustrated to analyse them in the light of this hypothesis. However, precisely because these limits increasingly erase the illusion of the species' optionality, in the final lines of this chapter, the proposal of the

[1] There are long references and nuances of this subject in Western thought: They can be reviewed in Hegel, in the Encyclopedia, in Derrida (1968) The ends of man, in Castoriadis (1989/1990) Anthropology, philosophy and politics, more extensive discussions on human singularity, as regularity, not reducible to class.

[2] Explored in Chap. 6.

[3] That are studied in a certain sense in Chaps. 1, 6 and 9.

psychoanalytic inclination of the ethnographic approach[4] is appealed to recover the human as an intimate experience of the human bond. An intimate experience of a link that should be verified from within that virtualization through technique and its tendency to engulf, displace and even replace the human (ζωον).

At the origins of the discipline, within Western thought—philosophical, and later sociological or anthropological—a broad representation of what the "subject" was and its relationship of otherness could be glimpsed—that with Hegel's notion of supreme consciousness saw its limits extended beyond ontology. Notions of "space" and "community" also had their expansions in that tradition.[5] In the same way, the notions of virtuality were broad.

The ideas of Pierre Lévy[6] about virtuality as a founding and evolutionary movement of hominization give an account of it. Those ideas are sustained on antecedents of the French tradition such as Michel Serres and his conceptions about the collective and the virtual, as well as a Deleuze and Guattari, when they point to the idea of deterritorialization; among others. However, these notions could probably little anticipate what happened after the appearance of the first virtual communities associated with the use of computer networks and the Internet. The devastating effect on civilization itself, and the potential that the virtualization of the subject opened—beyond its virtualizing function as a living being—transcends not only the negative, or positive, analysis of virtualization but also virtualization as a civilizing ontological effect to be located in virtualization as a moment in the future that supposes swallowing its hominid creator and transcending him, for his potential destruction, recreation or future co-creation and fusion.

As a complement, we handle the methodological hypothesis that ethnographic approaches to studies of the virtualization of the subject, as a result of new technologies, constitute a way to rescue the experiences and

[4] Hand in hand with the ideas of George Devereux (1967).

[5] See Nancy (1983), on the concept of the common in Marx.

[6] With antecedents in Michel Serres (1980, 1987) in "(…) the theory of the quasi-object that, when circulating, constitutes the collective" (Lévy, 1995, p. 125). We can thus find in Lévi the idea that the collective appears as an effect and not only as an origin; however, it is necessary to emphasize here, for this text, that these effects—of circularity of subjects and quasi-objects—are not being necessarily conscious for the subjects but part of the experience of subjectivity. Those elements constitute the explorable scopes of the networks as space and form of work of the social psychologist.

the remains of the human being in this process that try to gulp it down. In other words, the accentuation of the remnants of desire, affection and conscience—and intentionality—in the studies of virtual networks and communities could constitute that last bastion in the rescue of the human as a particular experience in this process of dissolution that it can undergo by way of the return on it of its own creation.

By proposing the ethnographic as a method, it is committed to the appropriation of its existence and its remains in the networks. In this ethno-psychoanalytic sense, it is just the definition of the turn that will allow us to continue to wonder about the place of the human being in this process, given the moment of immanence recognized today for virtualization, and which offers no guarantee for its future support.

Virtual Communities and the Internet

It could be said that in the 1970s, the first virtual communities emerged in a narrow sense, later coined with the concept introduced by Howard Rheingold in 1993; who defined them as "social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace" (p. 5). This interpretation, sustained on the tradition of understanding of a small psychosocial group, acquires relevance by highlighting the anthropological aspect of the fact—social aggregations—over the phenomenical—groups—by also emphasizing the idea of the living human being and its inseparable relationship to the "human feeling". At the same time, it rescues the notion of social bond as a determinant of what we call "human", regardless of the space on which it is based.

Since the first virtual communities and until this day, technological development in the context of the third industrial revolution (Rifkin, 2011) has led to the creation of new tools that can host them and that use computational networks as a means of communication among devices. Some examples of these tools are e-mail lists, text chats, Wiki-based communities and virtual social media.

Studies regarding virtual communities have investigated diverse related topics; for example, the individual effects (see studies such as Cover, 2016; Cramer et al., 2016; Donath, 2005, or Bessière et al., 2010), the roles established in these communities (see Golder & Donath; Gleave et al., 2009; or Zhu et al., 2012), the effects of long-distance work mediated by technological tools (see Dimitrova & Wellman, 2015; Ahuja & Carley, 1999; or Olson & Olson, 2003) and so on.

However, before entering the methods, it is required to pause a bit to review the background of what today is easy to name as "virtual communities" and their evolutionary relationship from the approach we propose.

Emergence and Expansion of Virtual Communities

As is known, in 1969, the first computerized network made its appearance (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network [ARPANET]). Using this network, the e-mail was created in 1971, a tool that allows the asynchronous exchange of text messages and files between two users. Initially, this interaction took place between personal computers (an industry developed in the 1970s) connected via a computerized network. E-mail also enables users to create lists and send a message to a group of users, who in turn can reply to all the members of the same list. This function requires a tool that supports group communication (from many-to-many users), a feature that has allowed the emergence of debate around shared topics of interest.

With a certain resemblance in their most ambitious forms, to the Athenian plenaries (Castoriadis, 1997), in truth, they were still far from sustaining a collective subjectivity around a shared object. Although even in these cases, one could only think about the exchange of content, rather than subjective effects thereof, and asynchrony, it would hardly help to sustain the idea of an emotional network; they were the first steps to what would come later as a fabric of more complex virtual subjectivities, where these messages would, in turn, become auxiliary forms of communication once those fabrics were created.

During ARPANET's early years, local networks appeared; these could be activated by users from home and allowed personal computers to connect with one another through phone lines (using a modem device) without the support of a computerized network. It was with local networks that the Bulletin Board System (BBS) was created, in which messages could be sent and then displayed as a chain. One example of this is Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link (WELL). Using a similar message visualization and modem connection, Usenet was then created, allowing users to read and publish messages in news groups.

BBS and Usenet, as well as e-mail lists, allowed asynchronous communication and the creation of thematic debate groups. They are considered some of the first tools that supported the emergence of virtual communities (Rheingold, 1993). However, for the hypothesis that concerns us, these became part of the ways of exchange and construction of auxiliary knowledge to the tissues of subsequent virtual subjective networks. Every virtual network requires, like that of the subject (Lévi, 1995),

supplementary supports of flow to its synchronic existence, which would be ensured in these "lists". If we think about the first advances in science, we will see how, in the absence of other mechanisms, scientific niches took it as a practice, to send letters to several of their friends, with the same content, on which they expected thematic feedback that would allow them to nurture their own work, as well as supporting their contribution in that operation of scientific creation in a particular area. A similar procedure could be traced in fiction literature, with the difference that this supposed, earlier in the West, the centre of creation in the "individual", thus renouncing cumulative collective creations such as the biblical books.

During the same decade, text chats and multi-user dungeons (MUD) were created; these tools could also host virtual communities, although they differ in that they allow synchronous text communication between multiple users. With synchrony, it was probably the most crucial *objective support* in the transition to virtual subjectivity in computer networks. Not only could the first *emulations of real subjectivities* be supported on it, but it also laid the foundations for *virtual subjectivities* in themselves. Collective subjectivity, as is well known—review Chap. 6 of this same book—is sustained, among other *necessary mechanisms*, on the *possibility of synchrony*. That synchrony that today seems natural to virtual networks, at its birth, constituted the necessary turn to the *subjectivation of virtual networks* as an effect of the *perception of the other as the immediate*.

In the 1980s, the Internet was created: a computerized network through which ARPANET, BBS, Usenet and the diverse local systems (LAN) begin to connect, then evolving into a huge global network of networks, currently known as the net (Rheingold, 1993). Between 1989 and 1990 the World Wide Web (WWW), a remote information system, was created; and in 1993 the privatization of the Internet began. Both events led to a non-stop exponential growth of Internet usage, starting in the 1990s and continuing until this day. By December 2020 the Internet had an estimate of 4,949,868,338 users, which represents 63.2% of the world population (Internet World Stats, 2021). However, beyond the numerical impact represented by the Internet and its various information exchange systems, it provided support for the definitive appearance of *virtual subjective collectivities*, initially represented by "subjects", but later, and increasingly, diluted, in also virtual forms of representation—avatars—and/or technological support, boots and so on.

Since the 1990s, new communication tools have joined the previously existing ones: some of them asynchronous, like Wiki-based communities (to create collaborative hypertexts), and other synchronous, like Massively

Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPG, where players are represented by avatars in a virtual graphic environment). WWW sites allow both synchronous and asynchronous communication between users. Some other tools have been designed that allow both communication modes, permitting the exchange of asynchronous messages and also real-time text chats and video conferences. An example of this are various virtual social networks (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Qzone and TikTok). All these tools take advantage of the amount of data that can be shared through the Internet, such as audios, pictures, videos and text, although each one offers different resources for virtual interaction. Although each one of them offers different resources to be used in virtual interaction, as a whole, they are the support of the *new virtual subjectivities* and, therefore, also of the majority of the investigations on the subject.

On virtual social networks, users create profiles through which they communicate with other users or groups, generate content and make it available to the other profiles/groups they interact with. That is to say, besides individual communication between users, social media facilitate the creation of groups with common interests around diverse topics, forming social communities. Although, in a certain sense, these virtual communities are relatively intentional creations of some subjects, once created, they exceed the possibilities and intentionality of their creators and end up constituting genuine networks of production of virtual social ties. These ties constitute themselves an object of study for social psychologists, as well as the effects on the subjects that are linked to them. In recent times, particular attention has been given to the exploration of pathologies resulting from these ties (Machin et al.), both in adults (Machin et al.) and the effects on children and adolescents, of their existence and exposure to virtual network links (Machin et al.). Despite the diversity of studies already appearing on the subject, it is still a recent and virgin field to be widely explored by psychology. Particular mention should be made of the emphasis on emotion (Tucker, 2018) due to its implications for re-interpreting the place of these in the notion of the human for social psychology, as we will analyse later.

On the other hand, in the studies on the use of social networks, there is the subject of artefacts related to networks. The artefacts, which initially received particular attention, are ceasing to be “the problem”, becoming less in a “middle man” and more an extension of the human. Globally, the use of social media has expanded enormously. It is estimated that in 2021 around 53.6% of the world population uses virtual social networks, a

growth of 13% as compared to 2020 (Data Reportal, 2021). Along with the creation of smartphones in the 1990s and their accelerated technological development, those tools hosting virtual communities have created many apps for mobile phones and other devices. A 2021 statistic estimates that 66.6% of the world population uses cell phones (Data Reportal). Records indicate that there are more devices connected to the Internet than people on the planet: 1.54 devices connected to the Internet per person on average. The same report estimates that 98.8% of social media users connect to them through their mobile phone and spend 44% of their screen time connected to social media.

And probably, this migration will mutate to new, more intimate and portable devices. What is relevant, at least for social psychology, of this mutation is the creation of extensions of the forms of interaction of the human being with the other to sustain the social bond in previously unsuspected plots. These plots, already analysed by philosophy and anthropology, as cause and potentiality of the human, now return with these virtual prostheses to explore the logical limits of their existence. The extension is happening not only in the mechanical, motor, accumulation or data collection and analysis capacity but even perceptual sense. These devices are increasingly approaching the ideal of feedback symbiosis with the human being, and sensory feedback in that sense is becoming defining even in the fight for market niches in the producers of these devices. It was to be supposed, from the first assertions of Greek philosophy, that the human would not be satisfied with the ties that were granted to him as a possibility, and his intention to expand it would be infinite. However, until very recently, we were unable to suspect its realization and the enormous challenge that this would constitute for psychology or any branch of the production of human knowledge interested in understanding it, interpreting it and acting on and with this phenomenon.

Virtual Gregarious Homo: From the Territorial Perspective to the Analysis of Social Networks as Forms of Virtualization of the Social Bond and the Community

The human experience owes its survival as a defenceless animal to the gregarious. This experience, although at times it is abandoned in unsuccessful narcissisms, systematically returns to the origins of the only way to cope

with the environment that the species has found possible. This associative form, to which it also owes the ontogenetic construction of its specimens, is also supported by the virtual as a possibility.[7]

Regarding community studies, Belly Wellman (2018) states that the terms community and neighbourhood have been considered equivalent, taking into account the shared residence locality of its members. This has influenced definitions, research and theories on the topic. According to the author, one of the consequences of this is the tendency to conduct research from a territorial point of view, assuming that a significant part of people's relationships take place in their neighbourhood and that the community is a dense network, where each member offers support to the rest in many different ways (as goods, company, emotional support, information, public services, etc.). Due to the socioeconomic changes that came with the first and second industrial revolutions, mainly the mobility between cities linked to the development of new means of transport, and the long-distance communication mediated by the telephone, it becomes evident that the territorial perspective is currently limited when studying communities. As stated by Barry Wellman and Milena Gulia, community bonds were already geographically scattered and strongly connected by telecommunications (2005).

Unlike studies of communities from a territorial perspective, the analytical perspective regarding social networks does not limit communities to a geographical area but considers social relationships and structures regardless of geographical location (Wellman, 2018). Moreover, it allows research of communities from two different points of view: (a) whole networks, analysing relationships in a given population; and (b) personal communities, analysing the social network of a given person and their interpersonal relationships (Wellman & Berkowitz, 1988).

These authors empirically reached points similar to those denounced by Deleuze and Guattari (1975, 1980) about deterritorialization, or the "out of there" by Michel Serres (1994), or simply the exodus as Lévy (1995) calls it. However, what is interesting about the process is, authors, with marked theoretical and methodological differences, report a shift in anthropological terms:

[7] Here we go back to the reconfiguration of virtual and potential by Felix Guattari (1992) to emphasize that in human experience, the virtual is part of the possible, not only as a value universe but as potential, whether incorporeal or trans-corporeal.

What was as a possibility in the human became current by provisionally using the contextual gregarious, to later, belatedly became into the "gregarious virtual objectification".[8] In that sense, the gregarious virtual objectification could be considered as a "possibility". In turn, they expose other options of the virtual, already affirmed in Deleuze and Guattari regarding Kafka's literature; the law works as something alien, even unknown, and it is its relation of recognition/ignorance[9] which places it in a place of the "gregarious human" or the "perverse human": in this line, for example, the destinies of virtual currencies are played, whose existence is sustained on chains, parallel to control, which separates them from unfair distribution, but also from the law, and therefore they run the risk of becoming virtual anti-communities.

The method, here, becomes a concept, as often happens in disciplines related to man. Panayiotis Zaphiris et al. (2008) report that the analysis of social networks is mapping and measurement of relationships and flows (network links) between people, groups, organizations or processing entities (network nodes). Besides nodes and their links, its analysis includes other concepts, such as range (size and heterogeneity), density (real ties as compared to what the net could theoretically support), cliques (subgroup of tightly linked nodes) and distance (number of intermediate nodes) and informatics tools[10] (Hansen et al., 2020).

The most significant difference in the network research line, with which we propose, is differences in definitions. Those are presented from a perspective, limiting the approaches to network studies to "the community" or to network theory as a counterpart to the community research tradition. We propose to expand those limits, temporarily erasing them. In this way, it can be appreciated that in related disciplines, from long before, the very notion of community and networks and even of the virtual had a broader and more generic conceptualization, which today allows

[8] Levi (1995) tries to emphasise its difference with Marxism insofar as the virtual refers not to realisation but actualisation. However, Marx's (1858) notion of objectification contained the idea of both realisation and actualisation. In fact, through this second alternative, it developed all the potentialities of the dialectical pair objectification/de-objectification, inherited from Hegel, applied in this case to the function of capital and its forms of relationship with human labour.

[9] Of the "*statute that names them*" as Piera Aulanier called (1966).

[10] For the collection, debugging, analysis and visualization of social media data, computer tools have been developed (for example, Datasift and NodeXL), some of which require programming skills for their use (Hansen et al., 2020).

incorporating the new effects produced by technology into the analysis of the psychosocial. In this sense, the notion of "virtual social bond" will enable us to understand that the human being sustains his existence on that relationality with the other, from which it even constructs relationality with himself. This path allows us to explore those forms of relationality—where networks are one of its effects as well as new support—real or virtual. It also allows us to analyse the results of these forms of relationality—groups, communities, institutions—as the effects of the return on the constitution, and removal, subjective of these relationalities and their affection involved in each movement of this bond. Each of these "facts" or "emergencies"[11] constitute "data" or "material"[12] on which to develop fields of work in social psychology.

Thus, the studies from the network approach revealed some significant features of the aggregations beyond the territorial: people belong mainly to loosely linked and poorly demarcated complex specialized (Wellman, 2018; Tucker, 2018) and shifting networks (Wellman, 2018); the dispersion does not affect their capacity to build social and supportive communities (Wellman, 2018; Tucker, 2018). However, these studies reproduce the traditional look of studies of "communities" and network as a focus of attention.[13]

In this sense, we prefer to focus on each of these "features", including the communities themselves, as effects of the subject's ties with their environment and others, as an exploration of their limits and conditions of possibility. For example, the multi belonging to sub-specialized and well-differentiated networks, in which the same person is involved, has facilitated the realization of the fracture of what was understood as an individual in its multiple expressions. Many of these "fractures" or "dissociations" used to appear as incompatible and even pathologized[14]—both their multiplicity and some of their expressions in the discordant ties.

In other words, the gaze, from within the tradition of community studies, overlooks phenomena that have been identified by other disciplines.

[11] On the concept of emergencies as an object of social psychology, the reader can review Machin (2005) or Chap. 6 of this volume.

[12] In the sense that Sigmund Freud developed it for the clinic, Machin & Santana (2006).

[13] "*It is a network*—nebulous, far-flung and sparsely knit, but real and supportive" (Wellman, 2018, p. 37).

[14] On pathologization as a trend in psychology and psychiatry, there is more extensive work in Machin (2016) as part of the project linked to the Latin American Association for Research in Fundamental Psychopathology.

For some of that traditions, the virtuality of networks is part of the human. Thus, for example, the differentiation and specialization of a subject[15] is not something new and particular to networks, but with networks, it comes to denounce before the "subject" its own fragmentation.

In research on this topic, it is common for subjects to declare the creation of different profiles, in different networks, for reasons such as: "I choose what everyone knows about me"; "each of these groups knows me differently"; "my followers, for one thing, they are not for another"; "my privacy is for certain groups, and the public is something else." This "recognition", of the fracture in what the subject "is", or more accurately said "is being", accounts on the one hand for the notion of the common,[16] not only as of the shared (Nancy, 1983) but as the selectively shared—which in many cases exceeds the intentionality and consciousness of the subject in that fragmentation. And in this selection the precariousness of the notion of the individual is precisely at stake, today not only evident for the philosopher but the citizen, previously oblivious to this type of reflections. But, in the same way, it leads to the revision of the identity, no longer as an objective, individual or defined, but as that which is produced and dissolved in the process of its production, that which makes its appearance once it is no longer there, that which it places in the place of immanence no longer identity itself but the processes or acts of identity differentiation by which it is put into question.

On the other hand, the effects, in terms of "pathos" or human suffering of this fragmentation, increasingly reveal the peculiarity of the human being as a resistant producer of its own humanity. In that sense, its symptom on the web is an effect of these same processes. Recent studies reveal how adolescents—and in some cases, adults—suffer the ups and downs of the bond, no longer in their face-to-face bonds, but similarly or with greater force, in those virtual ones. This reinforces the idea, vis-à-vis social psychology, that the "imagined" presence of the other (Vigotsky, 1978; Allport, 1968) is as significant as the real one. At the same time, it again incorporates psychoanalysis as part of the psychosocial thinking of recognizing "pathos" as inherent to the human being, resulting from

[15] Individual, it is here avoided as a term, just because it is a central part of the same discussion process.

[16] Antecedents of the idea of the common, as alien to the individual, but through which the subject is objectified, initially in a direct way and then in a virtual way, in its representation of money (Marx, 1858).

establishing the social bond. In this sense, the "pathos" as a possibility in all social ties is updated with virtual computer networks and opens new fields for the social psychologist.

A Brief Digression to the Notion of Community and its Application to Virtual Communities

From the emerging aspects that characterized the communities after the first and second industrial revolutions, many asked themselves if virtual communities could also be considered communities. Suppose the emergence of groups that interact with the use of new communication tools supported by computer networks present the distinctive characteristics of post-industrial communities. This question, usually answered by the dominant line of social psychology, as we will review below, must also be reconceptualized in this broadening of social psychology that these new waves are represented.

From the results presented by Barry Wellman and Milena Gulia (2005), specifically, those that display similarities between virtual and post-industrial communities, these similarities are (a) Internet users provide not only company and a sense of belonging to other users but also support; (b) evidence suggests that those relationships born and maintained virtually are intermittent and specialized; and (c) tools support many-to-many communication. Regarding significant bonds, Eden Litt, Siyan Zhao, Robert Kraut and Moira Burke concluded in a recent study that virtual interactions can be as significant as face-to-face interactions; an interaction is considered significant if its impact on those involved transcends the event itself (2020).

For many-to-many virtual communication to take place, physical distance is not a limiting factor as it was for post-industrial communities. Therefore, virtual communities facilitate interactions among people that are physically remote, thus endorsing the reduction of dense community structures and the geographical expansion of the network; both trends were already emerging with the development of transportation and telephone in post-industrial communities (see Wellman & Gulia, 2005, and Wellman, 2018). It is worth noting that the density of interconnectedness can increase when tools that connect community members through a third party facilitate the connection (Wellman, 2018).

As previously stated, tools that support virtual communities allow all types of communication (audio, image, video or text) to be visible to all users. Moreover, participation in virtual communities only requires a relatively low access and logistics cost (Sproull & Faraj, 1995), which leads to massive user access and to a higher number of relationships between members. These two features allow any request for help to be widely spread, leading to extensive support (Wellman & Gulia, 2005). As a consequence, they provide more support than post-industrial communities in less time (due to visibility) and with less effort (considering costs).

On the other hand, virtual communities favour relationships between members of diverse social status whose common interests prevail (Wellman & Berkowitz, 1988). The amount of available tools for the participation in virtual communities and the vast number of existing virtual communities permit a selective and voluntary participation; moreover, relationships become more and more specialized (e.g. around very specific common interests). To our knowledge, there are no studies estimating the number of communities a single person belongs to. It's worth remembering that a single tool permits the participation in as many virtual communities as the tool has available. Evidently, the Internet allows the participation in more communities and relating to a much bigger number of people.

Finally, another aspect of communication via the Internet is how easily users can disengage from problematic situations as compared to face-to-face interactions (Wellman & Gulia, 2005). Currently, closing a website or an app, logging out from virtual social network, eliminating or blocking a user or simply disconnecting from the Internet are easy ways out of conflicts. We consider that this feature favours instability in the structure of virtual communities and therefore leads to frequent changes in the personal virtual community.

However, as we pointed out above, in many cases (Machin, 2017), the subject cannot subjectively "disconnect" from the effects of that network. Probably, beyond the pathological effects, the traces of that nexus remain definitively part of his social gene of virtual ties that configure him and at the same time have effects on future ties that he will build, in many cases despite himself—as Aulanier effectively affirmed about perversion (1967).

If, as could be deduced from what has been stated about technological virtual networks, they accentuate belonging to loosely united and poorly defined networks, promote voluntariness, selectivity and specialization, the range of support received is greater, they promote an increase in

participation of an individual in multiple communities and accentuate frequent changes in relationships within communities.

If, they are been differentiated from traditional communities by their "own" dynamics such as interaction (Kiesler & Sproull, 1988) and mutual support (Constant et al., 1994) with strangers (Kiesler & Sproull, 1988; Constant et al., 1994).

These "dynamics" have often been interpreted as a result of the relatively egalitarian nature of virtual contact[17]; or even an effect of the de-individualization. In truth, what precisely they come to reinforce is the hypothesis of virtuality and the bond as a condition and at the same time an effects of the human.

On the one hand, all human ties occur as a result of that need, and differentiation is one of its effects. But, on the other hand, the individualizing once deployed generate the need for the bond as a way of insertion and more individuation. Thus, effectively, both the differentiation as the de-individuation[18] return here in the virtual possibility of its realization. In the first, for Marx (1958) the division into classes, and its artificiality for the human, are effects of a differentiation process. The bond is human rather than a class link, it is a necessity and condition. Individualization appears as a necessity and possibility through the link.

Thus, in exploring the effects generated by this link, such as uncommitted excesses in it, a new possibility of study appears, despite and in turn thanks to technological virtual networks.

There is a growing interest in psychosocial studies of certain themes identified as effects of virtual communities. These could be grouped, in a quick reading, associated with studies of the effects at various levels: interaction between people,[19] effects on the transformations of social

[17] Not mediated by race, ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status, etc., which encourages response to requests from other members (Wellman & Gulia, 2005).

[18] One of whose effects Marx studies by way of alienation.

[19] Interaction and reciprocal support with strangers (Kiesler & Sproull, 1988; Constant et al., 1994); and the construction of links and immediate repair of damages in virtual and face-to-face environments (Wellman & Gulia, 2005); the consequences on the replacement of public sociability by an intimate or private one (Wellman, 2018); the discussion around the Internet as a replacement or as an addition to other forms of communication, (Wellman et al., 2003), or the significance of or other types of interactions—virtual or face-to-face (Litt et al., 2020; Wellman & Gulia, 2005).

movements[20] or effects in terms of inequality and social control.[21] In either case, our opinion is that these approaches reproduce the idea of the technology-centred approach in its direct consequence, rather than in the evaluation of contextual modifications that the network or technology—as it could be at the time in transition from rural to urban spaces—means in terms of human experience on the one hand and on the other and more relevant, how the concrete human experience generates concrete forms of its own virtualization, which is the type of studies in which we are interested in promoting.

Towards the Ethnic-Psychoanalytic Research in the Digital Era

The current costs of Internet access and the devices to access this network, added to the resources offered by the communities' tools, make participation in virtual communities massive. These elements increase the chances that a person belongs to a greater number of virtual communities and interact with many people. These features, along with others related to interaction, contributed both to the adaptation of existing techniques and the creation of new ones in the study of and in virtual communities.

Method transformations have been associated, in addition to the characteristics of virtual communities, with the advantages of the connection networks and in which these communities arise and with the development of technological tools. The connection medium (currently the Internet) provides a level of access to the details of the social life of its users and durability of the traces of interactions, previously not accessible (Kollock & Smith, 2005). However, in effect, this gaze focuses on the idea of the "objectivity" of that trace: the perspective that precisely proposes the alternative of ethno-psychoanalysis is rather associated with the subjective personal reference, the emotional evaluation made by the subjects of those traces, in other words, the emotional traces of both the rest—or trace—of the virtual trace and therefore recidivism on the emotional trace and the

[20] Studies on citizen mobilization mediated by technological tools (Gurak, 2005).

[21] Studies have focused mainly on the availability of Internet access, rather than the direct consequences of participation in virtual communities (Chen et al. 2002; Wellman & Gulia, 2005) and the effects on the promotion levels of access and participation or by the accountant in social control (Wellman & Gulia, 2005).

immediate and current/acting effects of that emotional trace, which return in the subject—individual or collective—in some way.

Added to this are new technological tools, which facilitate that more and more details of many interactions between people, previously impossible to collect, can be recorded on a large scale and with sufficient quality (Gleave et al., 2009). In this sense, the "details" about the number of interactions (Gleave et al., 2009) becomes significant, insofar as they appear as significant affective symptoms for these subjects, rather than their quantification itself.

Since the emergence of virtual networks on the Internet, much progress has been made in adapting and developing research techniques for these contexts. Panayiotis Zaphiris et al. (2008) systematize and describe the most common evaluation techniques in the study of virtual communities[22]; from the adaptation of the more traditional ones such as individual interviews or questionnaires supplied online to the networks themselves, such as the analysis of records that, with the format of a text file, allows for tracking the interactions (activities and time spent in a specific task or a part of the website) of users with the system computer scientist. Data is collected and analysed using software tools. The analysis of the records also allows obtaining information regarding the users who visited the site, browsing patterns, duration and frequency of visits or from where they are connected.

As part of the restructured methods, once the study of virtual communities became inevitable, ethnography had to rethink itself. According to Christine Hine, ethnography had to change as a result of the emergence of new environments and the challenges they represent: the ethnographic study of interactions mediated by the Internet implied a different type of interaction and a different ethnographic object and a dispersed spatial distribution of the people involved (Hine, 2020).

[22] They propose to classify them into content and textual analysis of the messages exchanged in virtual communities, for example, the transcription analysis tool (TAT), an analytically based model and elements of Vygotskian theory, focused on the contents and patterns of interaction. Social network analysis (SNA) is the mapping and measurement of relationships and flows (network links) between people, groups, organizations or processing entities (network nodes). It can be focused on the individual (study from a random sample of members) or the entire network, providing both a visual presentation of the community and qualitative and quantitative measures of the dynamics present in it. Finally, people are more than a real person; they are user profiles that serve as software and product design tools.

Until the end of the last century, few ethnographic studies in the virtual communities' environment offered relevant insights into the virtual contact dynamics and the interactions taking place in these communities or the use people make of them (Wellman & Gulia, 2005). The last few years have seen a growing use of ethnography in the study of virtual interaction; several adaptations to the method and of its research techniques have been proposed, motivated by the unique features of virtual communities (see also studies like Golder & Donath, 2004; Katz & Rice, 2002; and Hampton & Wellman, 2002).

In this new context, Cristine Hine (2020) agrees with some authors in understanding virtual ethnography as a complementary approach to studying interactions mediated by the Internet (Hine, 2020; Gurak, 2001). In fact, some principles are grouped under the term, which is nothing more than the redefinition of general ethnographic principles, universally recognized, as a possibility of reformulating the ethnographic object with each decision to be made, now associated with (links), instead of points or step on the road. Others are statements resulting from the application of Aristotelian logic to the step of ethnography—digital ethnography, such as the idea of considering the internet at the same time as a form of communication, as an object and as a place (Hine, 2020) or the validity of all forms of interaction (Hine, 2020; Gurak, 2001; Hughes & Hammack, 2020).

One of the most important ideas that emerged from these recent digital ethnographies is the coincidence of several authors in recognizing that cyberspace should not be considered as a space separate from any connection with offline life and face-to-face interaction (Hine, 2020; Tucker & Goodings, 2017; Hughes & Hammack, 2020).

Finally, resulting from these trends is the claim, at least controversial, to reconfigure ethnographic research based on flow and connectivity rather than location or geographical limits (Hine, 2020). In the first place, issues of various kinds are confused. Indeed, flow and connectivity are important data to consider in any ethnographic analysis in networks, but these do not close the discussion on interactions or geographical limits. As analysed above, the issue of deterritorialization (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972, 1975, 1980), which he introduces as a problem for *ethno-analysis*, is the idea of the dissolution of geolocation anchors as a subjective reference.

As more and more online investigations have shown, this dissolution is just that, looseness, not demise. Subjects continue to search for spatial location references, even when they are reconfigured. The location,

inherited from the animal world, maintains weak anchorages in man since its inception. The biological principles of territorial location, vital in many gregarious insects, migratory birds and so on, can hardly find a reference that is not forced on a man. This loss, however, is replaced in the intersubjective experience of the human being throughout his existence. Virtual networks have only come to diversify those references, to reconfigure and reassemble them, but in no case to erase them.

In this sense, in the experiences of ethno-psychoanalytic research in the virtual network, they must be verified as one more link data, on the forms that these links generate, with each other in contact with the researcher and in the reception of this of those links.

In this sense, the continuous return of the non-registration of the subject in the networks, as one of the forms of manifestation of the discontinue being of him, is one of the most significant sources of ethno-psychoanalysis for the work with the virtual.

What "Data" Are We Talking About for Work from Ethno-psychoanalysis for Networks?

The specificity of the ethno-psychoanalytic study in networks could summarily be associated with the elaboration of what would constitute material or data in a psychoanalytic sense of the concept of "data". The specificity of the ethno-psychoanalytic study in networks could summarily be associate with the elaboration of what would constitute *material* or *data* in a psychoanalytic mean of the concept of "data". In this sense, we must start from the idea that more than the elaboration of explanations or descriptions of the networks, it is intended to collaborate with the networks in the clarification of their own production of representations—symbolic productions, imaginary productions and transformation practices. In this sense, we work more than with the contents; with the meanings and interpretations that the subjects of these networks create from those contents, using both the networks themselves and the subjects associated with those networks make of those contents and productions; and with the transformations of those contents and productions, the choices and the possible reasons for the choices and exclusions.

The commitment to ethno-psychoanalytic work in networks is nothing more than continuity in the context of the Internet of studies in the appropriation by networks and subjective groups of public spaces and the

specificity of timetables, places and objects of these appropriations.[23] These antecedents provide a certain specificity about the ways of interacting with the subjects and their appropriations of those public spaces, with their interpretations of the appropriations that they make of those spaces and the role of spaces in the constitution of their communities and their own productions of representation, the senses and the associated feelings.

Several alternatives can be derived from discussing the relevance of considering social networks an "entity", "object" or, to put it in a more traditionally accepted way, a psychosocial phenomenon. On the one hand, to accept that it is, despite the differences it has with virtuality, concerning the other traditional links—link or links—before the era of virtual networks, implies, in the first place, expanding the concept of subjective networks or community. Since long before the NTI, or in parallel to their emergence but without direct reference to them, they have been elaborated in fields close to what we have considered here social psychology, approaches that suppose that broadening of the spectrum of what is a community, the network psychosocial and social ties or ties (Machin, 2016). Without going too extensively through these discussions beyond the scope of this chapter, it suffices to recall at least two indispensable references from two intellectuals from relatively disconnected traditions. In 1983, Jean Luc Nancy (1983) proposed an approach to the community, returning to the etymological of the term "the common" on the one hand. On the other, linked the reference to the theoretical-political tradition of Marxism. This broadening of the conceptual limits of the term would imply, on the one hand, a more generic elaboration that is not alien to some of the most recent theorists of community social psychology in Latin America. On the other hand, it would suppose the clarification that community work is not out of the question the political and in particular the political, of the tradition of the left. Although, that is, some of the features that are always mentioned of the origins and developments of community psychology in the community doing are often neglected in the

[23] Regarding the interventions in the monument to José Miguel Gómez in Havana (Machin, 1998), some derivations of its interpretation can be reviewed in Machin (2000). On the appropriation of the communities gathered in the "Parque de la Libertad in Matanzas" as a public space, some research associated with a degree thesis was gathered in Sociocultural Studies, Faculty of Education and Social Sciences, University of Matanzas 2010. In Chile, several interventions were designed from this perspective around the El Llano park in San Miguel, Región Metropolitana Chile, 2018.

discussions of the epistemic links of the theoretical tradition on the community.

On the other hand, this conceptual expansion should also involve other aspects, such as the notion of community limits, which would be conceptualized as the extreme edges to which the community bond extends and/or reaches, where physical limits are only one of its attributes, but not necessarily the most important of them. This supposes, also for the transformation of social psychology that is analysed as a background in the whole of this book, the definitive dissolution of the narrow limits of the concept of the psychosocial, traditionally associated with a concrete temporal-spatial coexistence, to access a more generic notion associated with the existence of subjective emergencies that account for their existence (Machin, 2005). In this way, far from denying the existence of psychosocial groups, or small specific groups, one of the forms of existence of the group as a psychological phenomenon results from the human ties of some order.

On the other hand, it supposes, to recognize at least that there are psychosocial and subjective phenomena that ensure and facilitate the existence of such networks, and that in turn, they have consequences on the individuals or groups that affect hold them. In this sense, at least two new aspects of studies are opened, on the one hand, the one related to the support—support by a human subject—of such networks[24] and, on the other, on the effects on the different subjectivities.[25]

The maintenance of virtual networks is in itself that requires a living human.[26] The more the NTIs are developed, and the Al, in particular, the more evident it becomes that the appearance of self-awareness in the machine is improbable—beyond its theoretical possibility, which would suppose a phenomenon of autotelism, impulse and necessity towards external; of self-regulation, linked to the concept of life and its limits, on which, to the old controversies, nothing new is added theoretically. Without dwelling on this controversy, we are interested in advancing in studying the subjects that support the networks and the possibilities offered by the expansion of certain devices derived from ethno-psychoanalysis.

[24] It is, arguably, one of the focuses of analysis in this chapter.

[25] There is much written about the effects, particularly in children, young people and adolescents, on the negative and positive impact of networks or artefacts that lead to networks such as video games. In particular, we have conducted some of these in degree thesis in Psychology.

[26] Lévy's references (1995) lead us down the path, too broad and little argued for it to be sustained, of understanding the virtual even in gregarious animal expressions.

In the first place, it is necessary to discuss the assumption of the existence of a subject that supports the network from somewhere. It supposes the acceptance of being a desiring, beyond the notion of supra and transsubjective desiring machine Deleuzian. That notion of being of desire enables discussion about the visible effects of that presence, identifiable in the expression of that nexus. In this sense, it could be considered that everything that a subject expresses in a network is the result of a relationship with that desire. In this way, it would be a question of evaluating, on the one hand, certain intentionality that is carried out through the subject that supports the network—which is always assumed and that is undoubtedly also simulable with AI—and on the other a certain relatability to the stimuli of a network, which could conventionally be called "transferential". Although it is not possible to delimit until the last consequences, of the subjective origins of network input—beyond the mechanisms also of T.I.-type *captcha* and others, of discernment on programmed motors or robots—the study of the diversity and community of subjective effects of these interactions is interesting. They contribute, both to the characterization of the subjects of networks and the development of strategies for the subjects of networks—protection of content for minors, phishing attacks and so on—and the deepening by practical means of new impediments in the virtual, to access the assimilation of the subject, as consciousness/unconscious and desire/intentionality.

It is precisely on this axis that the studies are contributing some elements. The approach to the effects of consciousness/unconscious of the subjects linked to the networks has generated approaches to virtual communities where the researcher's feedback on the impact on him of specific contents induces mobilization in the subjects of the other side. Ethnopsychoanalysis studies in virtual spaces find a purpose, by "way" and with the "aim" of this mobilization. Identifying its effects, as material for return in networks, both in networks coordinated for this purpose and in networks of previous existence, is one of the desirable destinations of network studies, at least in the area of mental health. Studies on addictions to networks, the attractiveness of certain products and content, distortions of construction and personal representation, affiliations and dependencies—of likes, followers, number of users—are some of the effects of networks that are studied and approached with a mental health interest by this tradition.

In 1969, Devereux declared that the most significant challenge for any investigation was precisely its starting point, namely, the anguish generated in the researcher by the presence of the community to be investigated. This anguish will be expressed countertransferentially. He proposed to see these countertransference signs, rather than as a distortion of the investigation, as a methodological element, not excludable, and essential in the process. What can be derived as a conclusion from his fundamental arguments was that these elements contained a large part of the information that the research was going to reveal, not only for itself but for future readers of that research. The interpretations that readers would make of his research would not be based on mere field reports but based on accounts with annotations on the researcher's subjectivity involved, present and with effects on the facts and the interpretation of the results. His book, considered by some to be an act of profound honesty, illustrates his perspective, chapter by chapter with field material accompanying his reflections, notes and eventual interpretations.

In the current context, increasingly virtualized on the Internet, where virtual communities are an increasingly palpable fact and a challenge in itself, a world where new sociabilities demand that we infinitely expand our notions of group, community, subjectivity, connection, interrelation, network, interactions, communication, also the subjective and transference factors involved in the research process must be reviewed and reformulated from a much broader perspective.

Virtual networks have come to pose in a new way the epistemological problem of continuity for psychology, understood as one of the significant barriers that prevented the integration of diverse theoretical models. Theoretical models were traditionally continuous or discontinuous (Machin, 1998). In networks, we are witnessing a relationship between subject and object and between knowledge and things that are both discontinuous and continuous. Function with several vertical asymptotes could represent this form of imprecise continuity. It shows discontinuity, insofar as there are, objectively, insurmountable fractures once we approach the precise definition of what these subjectivities represent and are represented, on what is described. Still, at the same time, if they are extracted from the concrete, it can be reached to the idea of continuity in infinity.

The methodological approach to the knowledge of networks must consider this characteristic, which supposes an unlimited and infinite expansiveness, but at the same time finite within the limits of the framework that this network establishes. Thus, for example, the mere fact of the physical

disconnection of the network delimits the real boundary of this. This problem is not minor since the researcher only accesses the networks whose limits he manages to cross and does not possess the knowledge of that network, once reformulated from the outside. In other words, this could mean the reformulation of the Heisenberg paradox, again for the psychological field, but now redefined by the real imposed by virtual networks.

The alternation of registers, elaborated for psychology by structuralism, is another of the significant challenges reconsidered by the virtual world. What is the real, in a virtual world, perhaps the sensory contact, or the support of the network, or maybe the source of power or the language that translates it? On the other hand, the representations that mobilize the networks, which are in turn multilevel, are they symbolic or imaginary? Or perhaps also real insofar as they cannot be understood in their totality by language?

As we have been outlining, the psychoanalytic perspective of ethnography raised, in its insertion in the context of social networks, at least two fundamental problems—first associated with the transference, although Freudian psychoanalysis had been developed on a notion of representation that included an association of elements of various symbolic and imaginary orders—in terms of Lacanian psychoanalysis; subsequent revisions of psychoanalysis, especially reading it in a structural key, proposed a reference to the transference, on the side of the analyst—researcher in the case of ethno-psychoanalysis—related to the concept of desire. At the same time, it supposes a clear predominance of the symbolic order. In this sense, the recognition of something of the order of the transference, which validates an ethno-psychoanalysis in research in networks, should offer a view of representation, more attached to Freudian notions, and in that sense linked to the analysis of not only the symbolic—and linguistic—variations of the ties of the networks but the imaginary expressions, sometimes difficult to reduce to symbolic notions and to the non-symbolizable returns of the real.[27]

The other difficulty for ethno-psychoanalytic investigations in virtual networks appears associated with the corporal—the gestural, the proximal and other forms of the corporal relationship. To confront that difficulty, the researcher must assume that what is related to the body is a source of

[27] As Deleuze (1968, 1969) reminds us, with regard to Lacan's reading of Freud in the passage from *The Stolen Letter*, which later betrays again with the notions inside out.

expression for the subject. It offers both information for research and feedback for change/intervention. It also produces symptoms for the analysis from the contamination of that bonds, as emphasized by the most influential authors of the ethno-psychoanalytic tradition. In this sense, if the role of the corporeal is recognized, both in the social bond and in the constitution of the subject itself, and understanding that the networks act as an "other" bond, we should then accept that they create their own metaphors of the corporeal that should be studied carefully, both as the dispositive and as a thing in extension.

On the other hand, ethno-psychoanalysis suggests specific ideas about what is posed by some, as new problems in research in the digital age: the issue of the consciousness of the subjects of their space (Bárcenas Barajas & Preza Carreño, 2019) or the sphere of interaction at each moment—field—and the problem of the researcher's consistency (Bárcenas, 2019).

Although they may seem new from the perspective of ethnographic studies, in reality, it is only about the amplification of difficulties already elaborated by the ethno-psychoanalytic views since its classics versions. First, Sigmund Freud outlines a particular perspective on consciousness and the consciousness of the fields concerning its unconscious theory. Later, psychoanalysts dedicated to research (Pichon-Rivière, 1956/1957; Bleger, 1968; Bauleo, 1994; Rodrigué, 2003) returned with various emphases on the problem, while, on the other hand, it was developed and extensively revised for social psychology in a more Gestaltistic version by Kurt Lewin (1951).

Indeed, the subject operates with various fields, and his consciousness or focus of those fields is alternating. In this sense, what the digital world does is to diversify and multiply the possibilities of "fields" on which to focus consciousness, on the one hand, and, on the other, offer alternatives for mixing "fields" to provide the illusion of multifocal. This last topic is not new, at least from the ontological point of view. Already in the psychoanalytic clinic, with patients with drug use, we had noticed that the illusion of multifocus of consciousness was one of the problems brought to the consultation by patients. It was operating as an illusion of salvation from anxieties of control (Machin, 2001), as an obsessive symptom (2003) or as a persecutory trait (2005).[28]

[28] It was about whether the patient perceived this illusion of multi-consciousness of focus, as an alternative of salvation to his anxiety of control of all the realities in which he wanted to be and have control; or if he had perceived it as a threat to his need to be in one and only one

This social fantasy is also not new, and in the world of fiction, it has several antecedents; perhaps one of the most popular was the film *Matrix*, but in other ways, it is also *1984* by Orson Wells or *The Glass Bead Game* (Hermann Hesse). In philosophy, the reference to Hegel is inevitable, with the idea of consciousness as an appendix that separates itself from a configurative matrix of consciousness and becomes aware of the entire process.

Despite these antecedents, the subject's difficulties in etopsicoanalytical work processes in networks are not minor. First, it requires a record of the data related to the targeting processes of fields both of the subjects in interaction and the researcher himself, and the subjective reactions to each targeting process. Background on this is related, for example, to the study of blogs,[29] as subject production spaces. Second, they are faced with the severe difficulties of this notion and its possibility of applying it to this "individual" product and its collective "psychological" effects. These effects, according to the written record, allow dissections but hardly unequivocal interpretations. On the other hand, it involves the difficulties of interpretation: the place from which it can and should be interpreted, what returns to make.[30]

Ethnographic work in networks opens new nuances to many of the investigations carried out as a result of this transformative tidal wave of social psychology, of which virtual networks are a challenge and an opportunity. Studies on political and social action, with the support of networks

of the foci; or if, on the other hand, he had perceived it as a persecutory threat, due to the existence of various control foci on which to become aware.

[29] On the psychological features in the study of opinion blogs, Laura Courak (Gurak & Antonijevic, 2008) comments: "The phenomenon and practice of blogging offers a rich environment from which to look at the psychology of the Internet. By using blogging as a lens, researchers can see that many predictions and findings of early Internet research on social and psychological features of computer-mediated communication have held true, whereas others are not as true, and that the psychology of the Internet is very much a sense of the one and the many, the individual and the collective, the personal and the political. Blogs illustrate the fusion of key elements of human desire—to express one's identity, create community, structure one's past and present experiences—with the main technological features of 21st century digital communication. Blogs can serve as a lens to observe the way in which people currently use digital technologies and, in return, transform some of the traditional cultural norms—such as those between the public and the private."

[30] Taking into account, on the one hand, the ethical implications and on the other—and closely related to the ethical implications—the diversity of effects generated by returns, little traceable even before technology, almost entirely in the case of the era digital.

or directly through networks, gender and its mediations through social networks, or the pathologies resulting from networks, are just some of them.

Forward

As we have seen, the appearance of portable objects is constantly mutating, first from the computer to the cell phone, then perhaps to the clock and who knows whether in the future, to properly virtual objects. However, although this technological evolution can emulate almost all expressions of "the human",[31] will it ever be able to access the true anthropological pillars? Of human existence, in principle, associated with desire and consciousness?

Although virtual technological networks will facilitate and create new forms of social ties, different effects of these social ties and unique objects are their products and infinite expectations: Could these be analysed as something more than these "results" or "effects"?[32] In this sense, all the subjective expressions of these ties, all those objects as the creation of the human being and his ties, as the incomplete return of his desire for the other-for the beyond, for the lost, irretrievable-; they will be of interest to all psychology that is named social, or cultural.

Social Psychology will find interesting topics on the process of giving an account of one's own intimate[33] bonding experience,[34] of emotion as

[31] Even as analysed in another work, the very conditions of the appearance of self-consciousness.

[32] Some of the research on networks attribute psychological traits to these products—visual or connection —as a result of the interpretations of these by the researcher (Badger, 2004; Blanchard, 2004; Wei, 2004).

[33] As already mentioned, there is a long discussion about this in philosophy, which is constantly updated. It can be seen in Castoriadis (1989) "In the human sphere, on the contrary, the accidental and the statistical exist infinitely, but the singularity here is not alien to the essence, nor is it super-added to it. Here, uniqueness is essential; each time another is the face of the man that emerges, is created, through such a particular individual or such a particular society." And at the same time, his intention to emphasize that this essence, rather than existing, is open, it is not finished (pp. 135–136).

[34] Expensive to the senses given to the concept of experience in Vigotsky's work, as a last attempt to subjectify his procedure for the elaboration of psychic processes and to the concept of countertransference in Freud—curiously later expressed as transference and reduced to "the analyst's desire" by Lacan—to give an account of the experience involved in each analytic act, not reducible to a symptom, or entity of language.

claimed by various authors,[35] and the same form of reception of that experience by the ethnographer who wanders in the networks, resistance to the domination of the subjective by the network.

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[35] "I will focus on the area of digitality and emotion because of the increasing number of voices in academia, industry and beyond that claim that emotions and affect are becoming more accessible to (and potentially manipulated by) digital technologies, and as such, are deemed to be an example of the ways that human life is under threat from machines (McStay, 2016)" (Tucker, 2018, p. 129).

[36] It was preferred to cite the work by the date of the first edition. In some cases, that date was the moment of the conference or course that was used as the basis for each reference. In some other cases the date of a correction made by the author himself was also cited, when relevant to the discussion that it is sustained in the text. In the same way, the date of the revised edition was placed to be taken into account by the reader when he wishes to check the citations.

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